OLD!

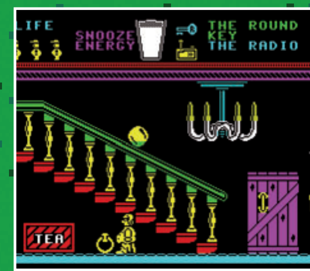
THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

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THE BIG FEATURE
TALES OF WALLY WEEK
CHRIS HINSLEY DISCUSSES HIS 8-BIT WORKING-CLASS HERO



IN THE CHAIR WITH...
THE OLIVER TWINS
FIND OUT WHAT'S HAPPENED TO DIZZY AND WHY 3DTV IS THE FUTURE

THE DEFINITIVE
ARKANOID
YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO TAITO'S BAT-AND-BALL FRANCHISE

SPY HUNTER

DESIGNER BRIAN COLIN SPEAKS EXCLUSIVELY ABOUT BALLY/MIDWAY'S ARCADE HIT SPY RACER

BACK TO THE 80s
BEHIND THE SCENES OF ATARI'S ROAD RUNNER
FROM THE ARCHIVES HUDSON SOFT
TRIP HAWKINS SPEAKS
READER REVIVAL **M.A.S.K.**

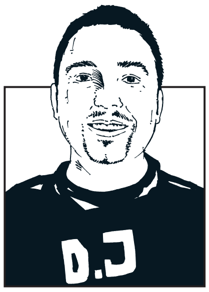
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THE RETROBATES

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE OLIVER TWINS GAME?



DARRAN JONES

Has to be the original *Dizzy*. It's one of the first games I ever completed and ensured that I always picked Codemasters over Mastertronic.
Expertise:
Juggling a wife, two children and **Retro Gamer** magazine
Currently playing:
Ghostbusters
Favourite game of all time:
Robotron: 2084



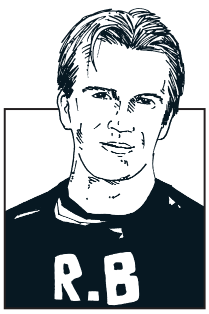
STUART HUNT

It has to be my very first Oliver Twins game, *Super Robin Hood*. I used to pump hours into that game when I was a kid and yet still got absolutely nowhere.
Expertise:
Games with flying bits in them
Currently playing:
Bionic Commando
Favourite game of all time:
Bionic Commando



MARTYN CARROLL

Treasure Island Dizzy, even though on my first playthrough I somehow managed to mess up the very last jump and roll off the moving boat to my death. There was rage.
Expertise: Sinclair stuff
Currently playing:
OutRun Online Arcade
Favourite game of all time:
Jet Set Willy



RICHARD BURTON

Professional BMX Simulator. What's not to like about bombing around on a BMX?
Expertise:
Stuff, nonsense, things and stuff
Currently playing:
Loom
Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner



PAUL DRURY

Road Runner for the Dragon 32. Worth the finger-numbing typing in for that inspired 'if then else' statement at line 20.
Expertise: Paganism and transcendental meditation
Currently playing:
Cheeky Mouse
Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



IAIN LEE

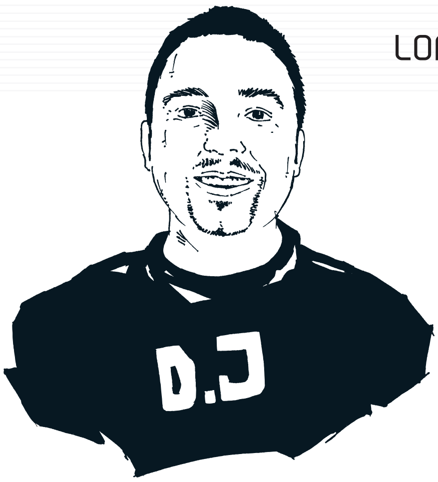
It has to be the original *Dizzy*. My mate Michael Hall had it for his Spectrum, and I was deeply envious that it wasn't available on the BBC.
Expertise:
Pretending to be American while playing on Xbox Live
Currently playing:
The new *Ghostbusters* game. Hanging out with Bill Murray is fun, but can it sustain?
Favourite game of all time:
Elite



PAUL DAVIES

Does *SpongeBob SquarePants Underpants Slam* count?
Expertise:
Banging my head against brick walls
Currently playing:
Ghostbusters
Favourite game of all time:
Ghouls 'N' Ghosts

LOADING...



If this year's E3 proved one thing it's that companies are still relying on classic franchises to get new gamers excited. Nintendo revealed a brand new *Metroid* and two new *Mario* games. Sega announced a new take on *Sonic* a few days before the event started, while Konami was proudly showing off new updates for both *Castlevania* and *Metal Gear*. Square also continues to find strength in its classic franchises, with a big announcement for *Final Fantasy XIV* and news that *Final Fantasy VII* would be available to download for the PSP and PS3.

Perhaps the most interesting thing about many of these new announcements is the exciting new directions they're being taken in, with both *Metroid: Other M* and *Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow* looking particularly exciting to our tired eyes. Indeed, *Lords Of Shadow* looks like it might finally break through the curse that has struck the series since it moved into the third dimension, while Team Ninja working on a new *Metroid* game should ensure that the final product is full of win.

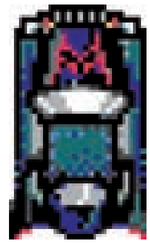
Add in the resurgence of the point-and-click adventure thanks to the reboot of *Monkey Island* and it would appear that the coming months are going to be great for both new and old gamers alike.

Enjoy the magazine





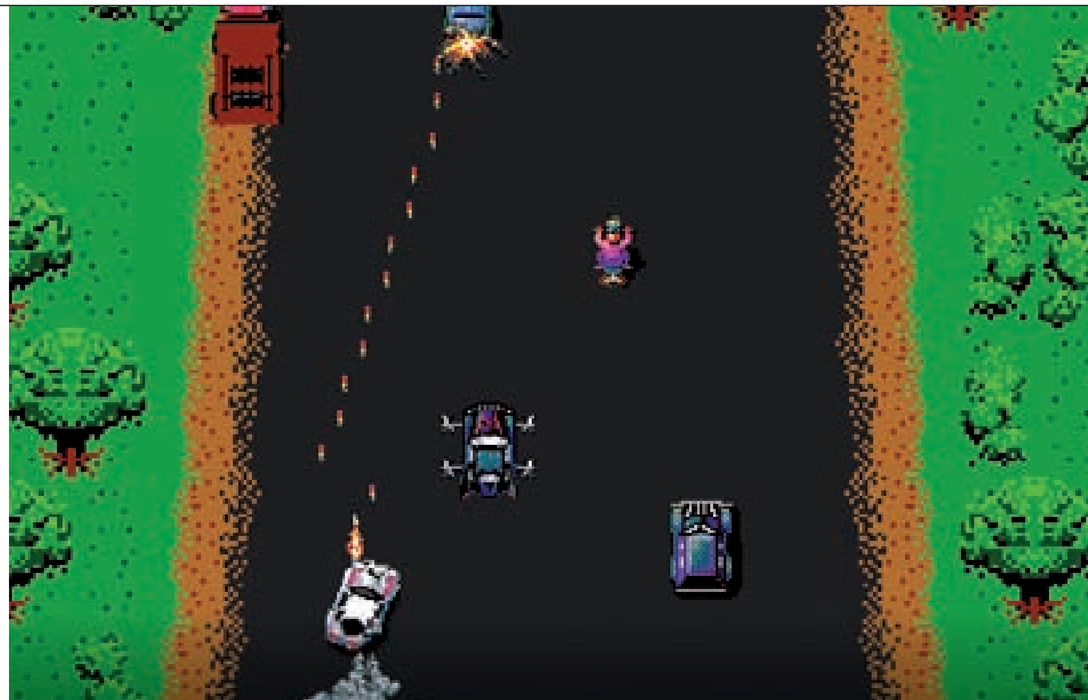
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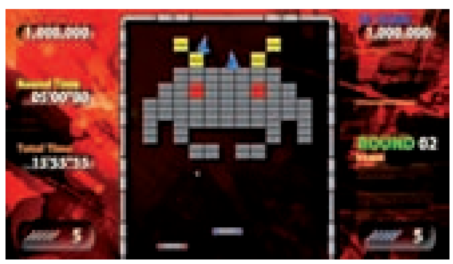


» **Load 66** Breathing new life into classic games

FEATURED

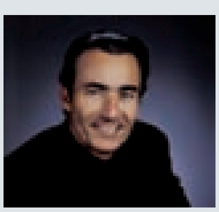
RETRO REVIVALS

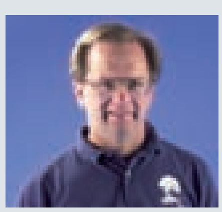


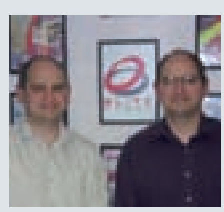




In the hotseat this month…







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“Miyamoto usually just talks gibberish”

Giles Goddard



48 STUNT RACE FX

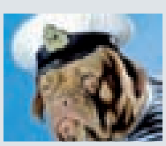
Japan-based Brit Giles Goddard discusses creating Nintendo's first three-dimensional racing game



39 8-BIT HERO

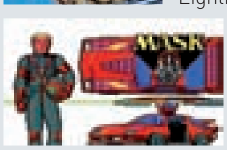
Creator Chris Hinsley teams up with David Perry to chat about Wally Week

retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL



26 M.A.S.K.

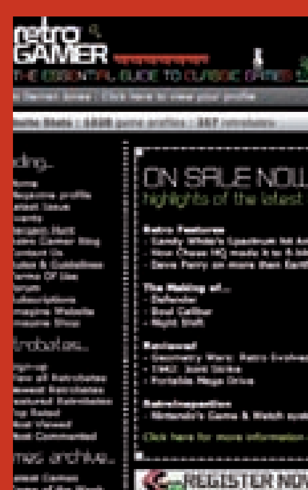
Regular reader Ashley Hopkins explains why he has a special love for Gremlin's conversion of the Eighties cartoon show.





ESSENTIALS

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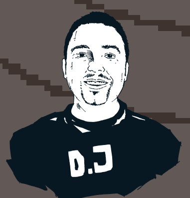
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» GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD



» It's a globe-trotting news section this month. Paul Drury travels to the US to report on Funspot, and Nintendo reveals several new franchises at E3, while Damien McFerran pops in to the Retro Computer Museum. Oh, and Iain Lee recalls his encounter with Matt Smith

CONTENTS



» Spacies as far as the eye can see…



✱ GO DEEPER

» Funspot was declared the largest arcade in the world by Guinness in 2008.

» This was the 11th annual tournament held at Funspot and Jason Cram was crowned champ.

» Donald Hayes won a special *Space Invaders* contest to mark the 30th anniversary of a tournament held at Funspot during the game's height.

» Look out for a future RG feature on the stories behind the American Classic Arcade Museum's rarest cabs.

FUNSPOT REPORT

PAUL DRURY VISITS FUNSPOT'S CLASSIC VIDEO GAME TOURNAMENT

Bob Lawton puts his beer down and gestures out of the bar to the huge arcade beyond. "In the mid-Seventies, we had a small arcade with pinball machines and shooting galleries. This Italian operator from Concord came in one day and started waving his hands around saying, 'Let me get rid of all this junk and put in some good games!' The first videogame we had was *Tank 2* and it grew from there. One game could take as much as a whole room of pool tables! I loved that guy…"

We should all love him. From its humble origins as a miniature golf centre founded by Bob and his brother John in 1952, located a few miles from its current site, Funspot has grown into the biggest arcade in the world, a veritable museum of classic machines. Ask Guinness World Records if you don't believe us, or one of the several hundred gamers who have journeyed from far and wide to New Hampshire, USA, to take part in the annual Classic Video Game Tournament.

"Coming in here I was blown away," says Brett from Toronto, Canada, half of 8-bit band Boss Fight. "This is a dream come true for me. My dad wouldn't let me come to places like this when I was a kid – people swore and smoked."

> "At Funspot you'll be dazzled by almost 300 classic games from the Golden Age"

Now they just play all the arcade games you remember from your childhood and plenty you've only read about, for while Funspot is a glorious mixture of old and new – downstairs, rows of networked *Daytona 2* cabs sit comfortably alongside vintage Fifties slot machines – **RG** readers will want to head up to the third floor, which houses the American Classic Arcade Museum. Here, you'll be dazzled by almost 300 classic games from the Golden Age. Eugene Jarvis's mighty triumvirate of *Robotron*, *Defender* and *Stargate*, all in a row; the shimmering vectors of Atari's *Gravitar* and *Major Havoc*; and ultra-rare treasures like *Computer Space* and *Death Race*.

Among the avenues of arcade cabs, we spy another unique exhibit: Walter Day. "Smarter people than me are now running Twin Galaxies," he explains, gesticulating wildly, as if defending his beard from bees. "What do I have to offer? Only my vision, which wafts and waves and wanders around the higher range of possibility and potentiality and

Gamer's opinions

» The players reflect on the 11th Classic Video Game Tournament



Jon Stoodley

It was such a proud moment for me to achieve my score, mainly because I've used the exact method of play from the Eighties. One coin, one game, no backing out. I've never used any form of game 'enhancement'. If it wasn't available in '83, it wasn't being used in '09, period!

Reaching the split screen, like I did a few times as a kid, and beating my old score 26 years nearly to the day in front of the gamers at Funspot, was truly magical. When I finished, Walter Day passed me a phone and it was Bill Mitchell on the other end, congratulating me. You could have knocked me over with a feather. What a way to finish such a big game.



Richie Knucklez

A lot of these guys I only know from the internet, so I've been putting faces to screen names, schmoozing more than playing. I have an arcade store-slash-arcade in New Jersey and I used to be in Knuckle Sandwich, a hardcore punk band. When I started in this business, I thought 99.9 per cent of the people were nerds and I wouldn't want to associate with them. But, you know, everyone thinks they're not a nerd. In their own mind, they're cool. And I know I am cool. At first I was a bit nervous about wearing it on my sleeve, but then I got out and started meeting other cool people and now I'm like, 'Hey I play these games, I'm right out there. I'm proud!'



Kelly R Flewin

I'm a senior referee for Twin Galaxies, so since the tournament began it's been constant hustle and bustle, running around, trying to log every score, getting yanked eight ways, which is almost impossible, but somehow Stephen Hawking working that quantum physics calculation proves it correct. Sure as heck felt like that. We've had records on *Quartet*, *Robot Ball*, *Toobin'*… The tournament is always of a high standard. Funspot do a great job making it possible. It's the event I will not miss. Even on my deathbed, I'll demand the nurse hook me up to the IV, and if I have to croak setting world records, so be it.



» Back to the Seventies with Atari.



creative embellishment, if you will. I'm chief evangelist, looking for the ethereal possibilities for Twin Galaxies."

"That pagan f*****," whispers Dwayne 'Nibbler' Richard in my ear. "You can tell when he's lying: his lips move." A veteran of the scene and still setting records today, Dwayne proceeds to tell me about his forthcoming documentary, *Triumph Of The Will: The Perfect Fraudman, The King Of Con And Other Arcade Legends*, which will reportedly tell the truth about who really got the first perfect score on *Pac-Man* and who's cheating on *Donkey Kong*. Intriguing.

But then, wandering along the aisles here, it can feel like you're on the set of a movie. Key scenes from *The King Of Kong* and *Chasing Ghosts* were shot here, and faces from the big screen are everywhere. There's Brian Kuh, who this time isn't telling all who'll listen that there's a *Donkey Kong* kill screen coming up. He's trying to get there himself, and comes agonisingly close. We watch Todd Rogers trying to shave a tenth of a second off his *Drag Race* record and check that Adam Wood hasn't relapsed.

"No, I still don't drink, smoke or take drugs and yes, I'm still addicted to videogames," he laughs, referring to his memorable quote that opened the *King Of Kong* film. "The tourney is fun but I just love being in this arcade, playing the machines. The best part, though, is encountering all these larger than life characters that do amazing things, like spending ten hours on a single quarter."

Ah, we almost forgot about the tournament, a challenging event requiring players to put in their best scores on 15 machines, from *Crazy Climber* to the obscure *Cheeky Mouse*. That's partly because we're distracted by one of our British contingent doing amazing things. True to his word, Jon Stoodley, featured in **RG** 59, spends just under five hours setting a new British *Pac-Man* record of 3,227,000, reaching the mythical split screen and beating the score he set in 1983 by exactly 6,000.

"We bought that machine in 1980 and it's been here ever since," notes arcade manager Gary Vincent. "It's the one that Billy Mitchell got his perfect game on and lots of people have their picture taken with it, copying his stance. It's kind of gained a life of its own…"

Come and taste the good life at Funspot. We guarantee you'll give it the thumbs up. *

THE RETRO DEBATE

» Which rare cab would you most like to play?

VISIT RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM TO HAVE YOUR SAY

gmintyfresh
The head says *After Burner* because it's an arcade game I've played to death and enjoyed immensely over the years. But the heart says *Space Harrier* just because it's a great game and a game I only experienced once in its full hydraulic glory!!

shadowman
It's got to be *Space Harrier* for me. I love the game to bits and I'd love to experience it with the hydraulic cab.

the_hawk
I know it's not on there, but I'd really really love to play *Missile Command* with the trackball, something I've never done before. Out of the choice I'd most love to play *Computer Space*, just for the sheer history of it. It's one of the very few arcade games that was released before I was born.

Sputryk
Hmm… tough choice. Do I choose *Computer Space*, because it's the only cab I have never even seen in an arcade and a piece of history that needs a play; *After Burner*, provided the 'deluxe cab' you refer to is the R360, which is surely the greatest cab of all, and thoroughly enjoyable; or *Space Harrier*, as it's a cracking game despite 'only' (!) being a hydraulic cab when compared to the R360.

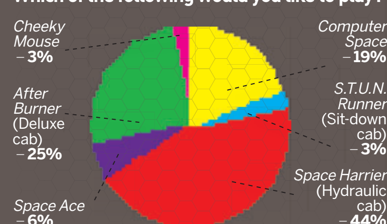
Okay, I choose based on entertainment value, and that is *Space Harrier*. It helps that I have only played the stand-up variant before, not the hydraulic, so it would be a new experience.

ID: mayhem
Going really left-field here and voted for *Cheeky Mouse*. Because it's the only cab of that nine that I haven't played. Some of them I played "back in the day"… I recall *Red Baron* was found during a trip to the US in the mid-Nineties and I played *Computer Space* at one of the CGE shows in Vegas. Probably also where I played *Space Ace* too.

Opa-Opa
None of those interest me as I have either played on them hundreds of times or never really been interested in them in the first place.

FORUM OPINION

Which of the following would you like to play?



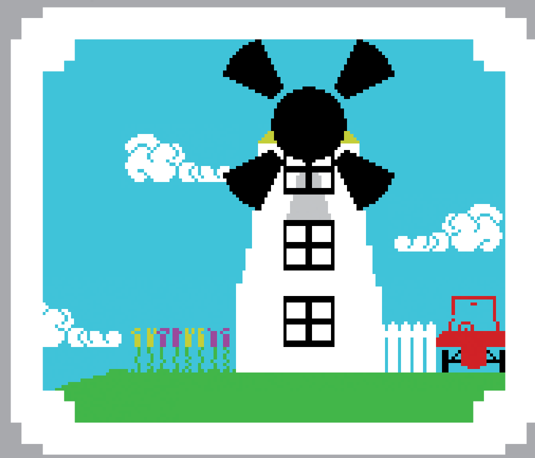
retro columns

» RETRO RECOLLECTIONS WITH CELEB IAIN LEE

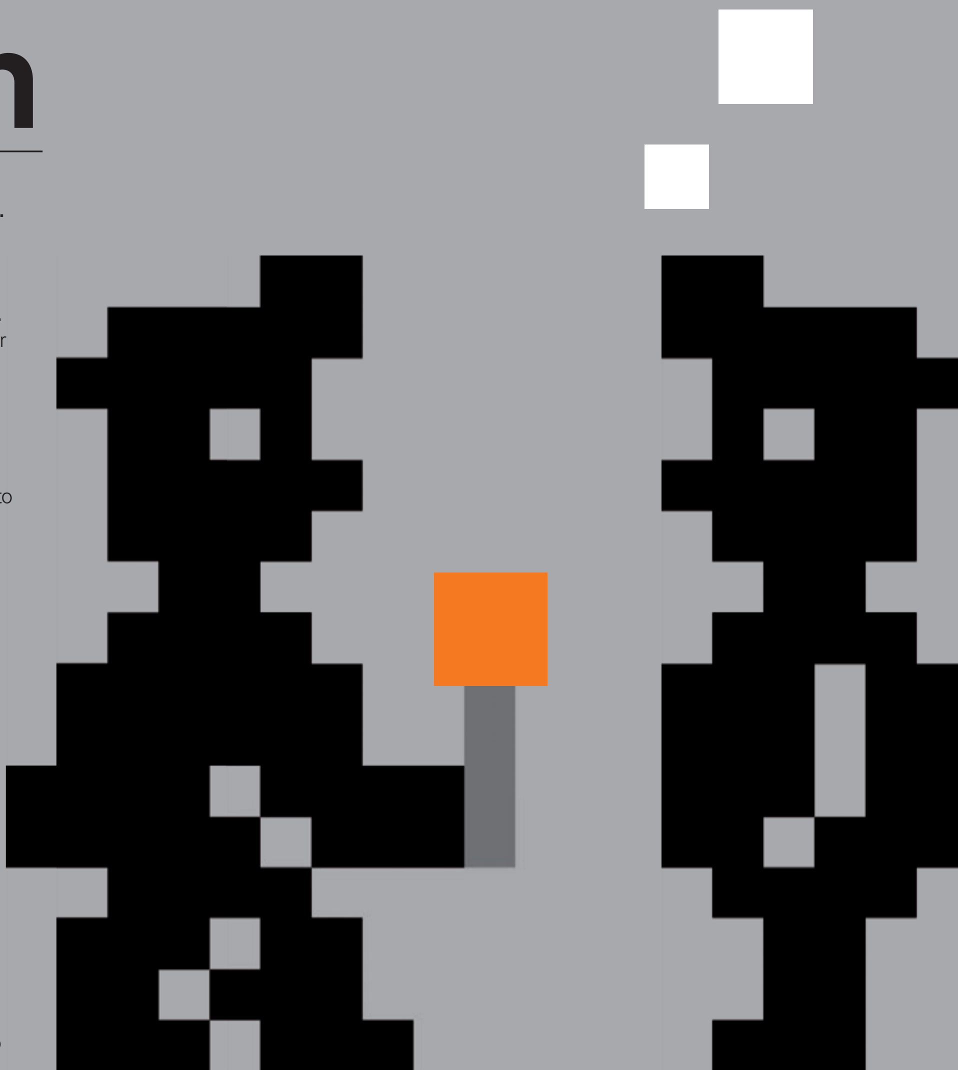
Here's the bio...
Iain Lee has been a fervent gamer since he was tiny. And that was a long time ago. In between playing computer games and collecting crap from eBay, he has presented Channel 4's *The 11 O'Clock Show*, *Rise*, and currently does bits of stand-up as well as presenting *The Sunday Night* show on Absolute Radio at 10pm.



Hi there, my name's **Iain Lee**. You might remember me from Thumb Bandits, The 11 O'Clock Show and Absolute Radio, but now I'm here to confess my love for retro



Double Dutch



I've been responsible for two TV shows about games in my time. The second, Thumb Bandits, sadly wasn't great. It had some good bits in it, but it was nowhere near as good as Bits, the show it took over from. Replacing two fit girls with a lanky pale bloke and having a rude punning title does not a good series make.

The other show is a rarity for me in that it's something I'm actually rather proud of. *Thumb Candy* was a comprehensive history of computer games up to the turn of the century. I had the opportunity to travel the world and interview some really cool people like Nolan Bushnell, Alexey Pajitnov and Shigeru Miyamoto, but my favourite was easily Matt Smith.

I think I can safely assume that everyone reading this knows who Mr Smith is by now so I shan't patronise you by explaining. In fact, he seems to pop up quite regularly these days. But back in 1999 he was still something of a recluse and hadn't been seen for years. A team of researchers – actually a bloke called Simon – spent months hunting him down and eventually we found him.

We nervously trekked up north to talk to him. After visiting Tokyo and LA, the outskirts of Liverpool seemed a bit of a comedown. But we didn't care. We were all so excited to be meeting a genuine legend, a hero and a man who had been an integral part of our youth.

Matthew did not disappoint. He played up to his eccentric reclusive persona perfectly. He was very humble and incredibly surprised that anyone was interested in work he had done as a teenager – this was well before retro gaming had become mainstream.

It was a great interview as well. All of the myths circulating on the internet were thrown at him. Yes, he had spent a lot of his *Manic Miner* money on, er, enjoying himself, shall we say. Yes, he had lived in a Dutch commune, and as for whether he'd ever sold fish, well, even Matthew wasn't sure about that one.

He was also wonderfully potty. We had to stop filming at one point after I asked him a question and he froze for a couple of minutes. I looked nervously at my director, James Bobin – now the brains behind the *Flight of The Conchords* TV show – who shrugged his shoulders with a "I dunno what to do" kind of look.

Eventually Matthew's glazed look passed. "You okay, Matt?" I asked.

He nodded and laughed. "Yeah, I'm fine. Sorry, I got confused and started thinking of the answer in Dutch. What was the question again?"

Matt's now, within the gaming community, the star he always should have been. A legend and one of the nicest blokes you'll ever meet.

Thumb Candy is long lost, and because of various footage rights, it'll probably never be shown on TV. Anyway, it's not complete any more. It was filmed nine years ago and so much has happened since. If you have a few spare minutes, may I suggest you hunt it down on YouTube. Enjoy.

Matt Smith was surprised anyone was interested in work he had done as a teenager

Funniest member of *Lost*? Josh Holloway. Kept dropping his Dharma overalls in the back of shot when I was interviewing Jack Bender and kept referring to me as 'English Man'.



CLASSIC REVIEWER



BIO
Name:
Julian Rignall
First Magazine:
Zzap!64
Role:
Editor
Favourite Game:
World Of Warcraft
Favourite System:
iPhone

■ Favourite game
World Of Warcraft. It's kept me enthralled for four years and still keeps me playing – pretty amazing, really, for someone who normally gets bored of games very quickly.

■ Favourite system
iPhone. Games, movies, music, camera, internet, GPS and communications tool in one tiny package, and all operated by one button. Best piece of hardware yet!

■ Best press trip you've been on
I got to drive a Porsche 911 around the High Speed, Handling and Alpine tracks at Millbrook Proving Ground. Funnily enough, I can't remember what game it was for – some generic early Nineties racing game – but the day itself was incredible. Just goes to show how effective these trips really are in selling a product.

■ Best magazine you've worked on
Mean Machines. I think we hit a serious groove there for a few years!

■ Magazine you'd like to work on
Evo. Probably the best car mag in the world, created by a team that has its own culture and style. I imagine working with them would be a lot of fun.

■ Best person you've met in the industry
Dwayne Minton.

■ How have magazines changed since you started on them?
Magazines have become more professional, have higher production values and are much better designed. But in the process many have lost their passion, personality and wit, and take themselves and the industry far too seriously.



» The open day had almost any piece of retro hardware you could imagine available to play.

RETRO COMPUTER MUSEUM OPEN DAY

RETRO COMPUTER MUSEUM OPEN DAY PROVES A HIT, AND MORE ARE COMING…

The date: Sunday 31 May. The place: the sleepy Leicestershire village of Swannington. The event: The Retro Computer Museum Open Day, and you'll be glad to know that Retro Gamer was in attendance.

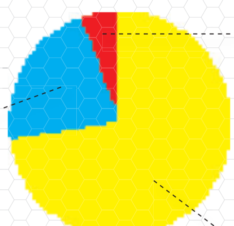
In case you didn't know, the Retro Computer Museum is run by gaming enthusiast and all-round nice bloke Andy Spencer – no, not the one who did *International Soccer* on the C64, before you ask – and his wife, Linda. The aim of the project is to create a permanent working exhibit of computer and console history, where visitors can pick up a pad and experience classic gaming first-hand.

The concept is still very much in development and, to drum up interest and vital funds, one-off events such as this are essential. The venue was packed to the rafters with classic gaming machinery, with practically every format you could possibly mention – including some real rarities such as a Famicom Twin and a Sega SG-1000. Quality food and drink was also provided, and the healthy competition on some of the machines ensured that a good time was had by all. Check out the website at **www.retrocomputermuseum.co.uk** for more info, and mark down November in your diary – it's when the next event is due to take place. *

FORUM OPINION

VISIT **RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM** TO HAVE YOUR SAY

Do you think videogaming deserves its own museum?



Yes, but I'm not sure there would be enough interest. – **21%**

Not really. You can enjoy retro games in other ways – **6%**

Yes! Gaming is as important as music and film! – **73%**

"I believe it is as worthy of such tribute as cinema, although whether the general populace also views it as such is another matter. For better or worse, I can honestly say that gaming has provided as many significant memories as films have." – **Rabiteman**

"Does it warrant its own museum? Much as it pains me to say, probably not. There is sufficient material to fill one, but I'm not so sure it needs a museum of its own." – **Antiriad2097**

MICRO BYTES

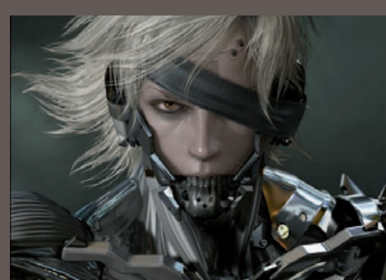
Snippets of news from the exciting world of retro



» Your Sinclair Returns!
Fans of *Your Sinclair* rejoice. The 94th issue created especially for issue 9 of **Retro Gamer** is now available from Nick Humphries' *Your Sinclair* Rock 'N' Roll Years website. First released in November 2004, the original PDFs, as well as plenty of juicy new extras, including a look at the cover's creation and the original **Retro Gamer** press release, are now available from **www.ysrnry.co.uk/ys94.htm**.



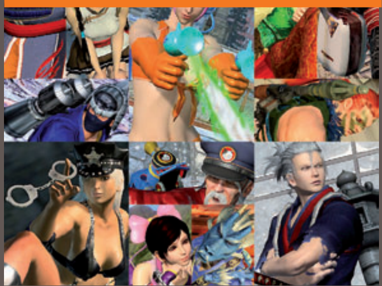
» Steve Wiebe fails to crack Kong record
As we revealed in our last issue, *King Of Kong* star Steve Wiebe was set to appear at E3 in order to challenge for the *Donkey Kong* world record. Sadly, despite a sterling effort, his score of 989,400 wasn't enough to trump Billy Mitchell's current record of 1,050,200, although the challenger did have to contend with a power cut during one of his attempts.



» New Metal Gear titles confirmed
Despite Hideo Kojima previously stating that he wanted to work on projects other than *Metal Gear*, three new *MGS* games were announced at E3. *Metal Gear Solid: Rising* focuses on Raiden and will appear on both the 360 and PS3. *Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker* is a PSP exclusive, and *Metal Gear Arcade* is a coin-op version of *Metal Gear Online*.

MICRO BYTES

Snippets of news from the exciting world of retro



» Virtua Fighter 5 update is retro heaven

Sega has launched an update for the arcade-only *Virtua Fighter 5 R*, which floods the game with more fan service than you can shake a stick at. Fighters have new costumes that are based on classic Sega franchises, including *Space Channel 5, Samba De Amigo, Space Harrier, Virtual On* and *Shinobi*. Sadly, there are currently no plans for a domestic version.



» Bionic Commando Competition

Regular readers will no doubt remember us giving *Bionic Commando* a rather healthy 85% back in issue 64. Well, if you have an Xbox 360 and haven't played this excellent game yet, then you're in luck because Capcom has kindly given us five spanking new copies to give away to lucky readers.

Well, we say give away, but that would be a little too easy, so you're going to have to answer the following question in order to bag yourself a copy of this excellent little release. Get it right and you too could be swinging around in one of the best 3D updates that we've recently played. Just email us at **retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk** with your answer to the following question:

- **Q) When was the original arcade game released?**

Terms & Conditions
1. This competition is run by Imagine Publishing.
2. By entering our competition, you agree to be bound by all rules relating to the competition (and which may be changed at any time without notice).
3. This competition is open to all residents of Europe and other PAL territories excluding employees of Imagine Publishing, Capcom and Grin, their families, suppliers, agents, associates or anyone professionally associated with this competition. Entrants must be 15 years of age or over to enter. Only one entry per email address is permitted. Multiple entries from the same email address or from the same individual will be counted as one entry. Imagine Publishing may request proof of eligibility to enter the competition.
4. In the event of any dispute, Imagine Publishing's decision is final, and no correspondence will be entered into.
5. All eligible entrants who register before midnight on 12/08/09 will be entered into the competition. Winners will be drawn on 13/08/09.
6. The five winners will receive a copy of *Bionic Commando* on the Xbox 360.
7. All prizes are non-transferable, no cash alternative will be offered. We reserve the right in our sole discretion to substitute any prize with an alternative of comparable value. All prizes are subject to the terms and conditions of the manufacturer or supplier.
8. The winner will be notified by email on 14/08/09. To claim the prize the winner must confirm acceptance within 30 days.
9. The winner consents to the use of their name and image being used for publicity purposes.
10. These competition Terms and Conditions shall be governed by, and construed in accordance with, English law and are subject to the non-exclusive jurisdiction of the English Courts.



» [Wii] It will be interesting to see how the development philosophies of Team Ninja and Nintendo merge.

> "The footage of Metroid left more than a few jaws on the floor"

NINTENDO FRANCHISES RESURRECTED AT E3

NEW METROID, MARIO AND ZELDA TITLES ON THE HORIZON

The talking point of this year's E3 might have been Microsoft and Sony's entries into the 'motion control' war with Project Natal and 'The Wand' respectively, but for Wii owners already accustomed to 'waggle' technology the big news was Nintendo's salvo of brand new instalments for its classic franchises.

Mascot Mario will be enjoying two new adventures in the shape of *New Super Mario Bros Wii* and *Super Mario Galaxy 2*. The former follows the lead of the DS 2.5D platformer *New Super Mario Bros* and promises to add a multiplayer spin to proceedings, with several people competing at once to make it to the end of each level. *Super Mario Galaxy 2* is naturally the sequel to one of the finest Wii games yet released, and legendary designer Shigeru Miyamoto has promised that "almost 90 per cent" of the ideas contained within are brand new.

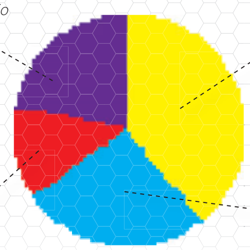
Another surprise was the announcement of *Metroid: Other M*, a title that is being developed in collaboration with those talented chaps over at Team Ninja (*Dead Or Alive, Ninja Gaiden*). The explosive promo footage shown during Nintendo's press conference left more than a few jaws on the floor and the game looks set to combine both a deep and involving storyline with Team Ninja's trademark OTT action. Fans might be disappointed to learn that there doesn't seem to be any intention of 'sexing up' Samus, however.

Finally, Miyamoto revealed behind closed doors that a new Wii *Zelda* is in development – although all he had to show was a single piece of concept art, so it's fair to say it's still some way off. The news of these titles did much to placate the hardcore masses that were so harshly aggrieved with Nintendo's E3 conference last year, when the casual-friendly *Wii Music* was the 'big surprise' of the show. *

FORUM OPINION

VISIT **RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM** TO HAVE YOUR SAY

Which Nintendo announcement excited you the most?



"As with the current electoral system, where is the 'none of the above' option? I suppose *Metroid: Other M*, but Nintendo's E3 was sequel-heavy rubbish" **– Fightersmegamix**

"I'm quite excited by the new *Mario Galaxy*, but a new *Zelda* is always a huge event – we get more *Marios* than *Zeldas* – so I'm definitely more excited about the latter." **– Spooky**

MERCURY RISING

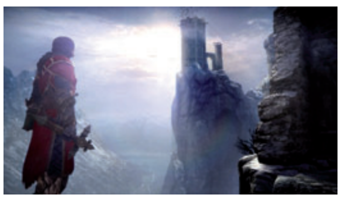
KOJIMA OVERSEES NEW NEXT-GEN CASTLEVANIA TITLE

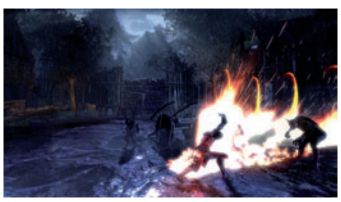
One of the surprise announcements at this year's E3 wasn't that a new *Castlevania* was readying for release on the 360 and PS3 but that the game's development is being overseen by Hideo Kojima's production studio, Kojima Productions.

Castlevania: Lords Of Shadow is the latest *Castlevania* game, in development for the current generation of consoles. It's being developed by the guys and gals at MercurySteam and is said to be a 3D reboot of Konami's popular vampire-hunting franchise. With a CV that includes *American McGee Presents Scrapland* and *Clive Barker's Jericho*, MercurySteam is certainly no stranger to handling a horror franchise, and, in the past, Konami has proven to be very sensible when deciding who it doles out franchises to, as the impressive *Gradius V* (Treasure) and *Contra 4* (WayForward Technologies) have proven.

The impressive cinematic trailer unveiled to attendees at this year's E3 sadly gave very little away about the game's story or how it will fit into the *Castlevania* series – we still don't know whether the game's hero, Gabriel, is a Belmont or not. But from what little we've gleaned from the early snippet showcased at the expo, the game is another gothic action-adventure game hell-bent on exorcising that 3D hack-and-slash demon that manifested in *Castlevania 64*. Looking a little like a mixture of *Devil May Cry* and *God Of War*, but with a cool European slant to the monsters and enemies, the game may be a bold and controversial direction for the franchise. With Kojima's team on board, plus the likes of Patrick Stewart and Robert Carlyle lending their voices to the project, you can be sure that this is going to be something quite cinematic. *



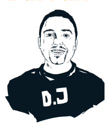




» [360] *Castlevania* doesn't have the best track record in 3D, but here's hoping that Kojima can make it work.

* WHAT WE THINK

Darran



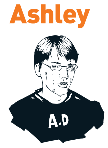
Castlevania has always suffered with the transition to 3D, but I'm expecting big things from *Lords Of Shadow*. Luckily the early trailer is definitely to my liking, so here's hoping that they can pull this off. Roll on 2010.

Stuart



I'm not going to sit here and defend *Castlevania 64*, but there were elements I liked about it. If Konami and MercurySteam can really go all out to create an epic adventure built around the mythology of *Castlevania* then I'm sold.

Ashley



I'm a huge *Castlevania* fan, so I'll naturally approach this hybrid development with caution. It worries me that the game wasn't always supposed to be a *Castlevania* title, but the involvement of Kojima is promising.



WHAT IF?

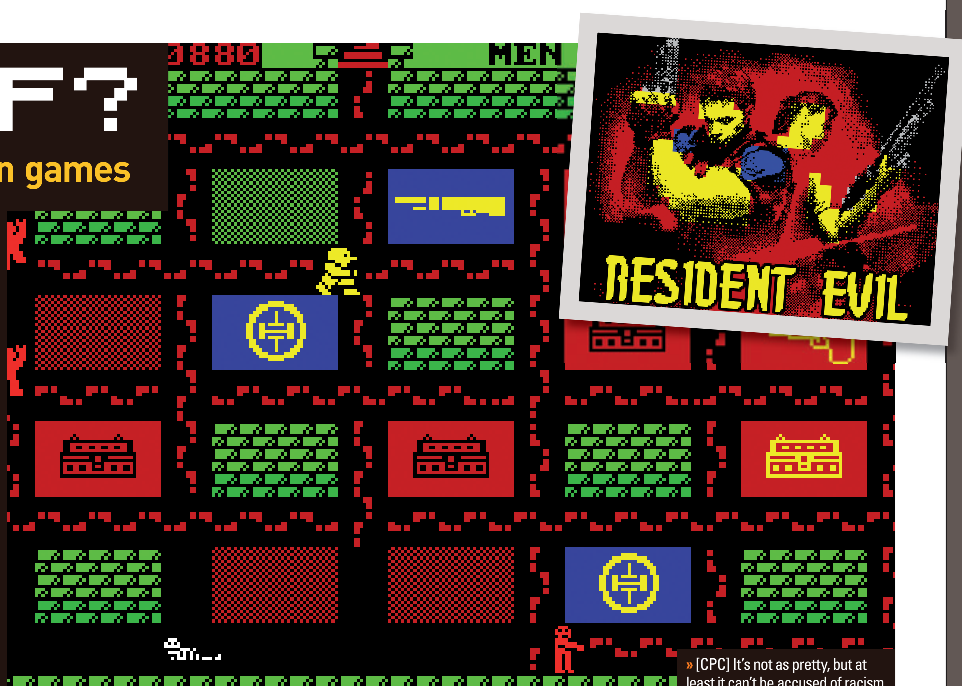
Your favourite next-gen games remade, retro style

Subject No 3

Resident Evil 5

EVER WONDERED WHAT some of your favourite current game franchises would look like had they been made before the days of infinite lives, continues, fancy-pants graphics and billion-dollar budgets? Well, ponder no more.

We reckon that *Resident Evil* would have fit perfectly into the 'search and avoid' *Oh Mummy* template. Just replace mummies with zombies and that chap who looks like Howard the Duck with the muscle-bound Chris Redfield. Job done.

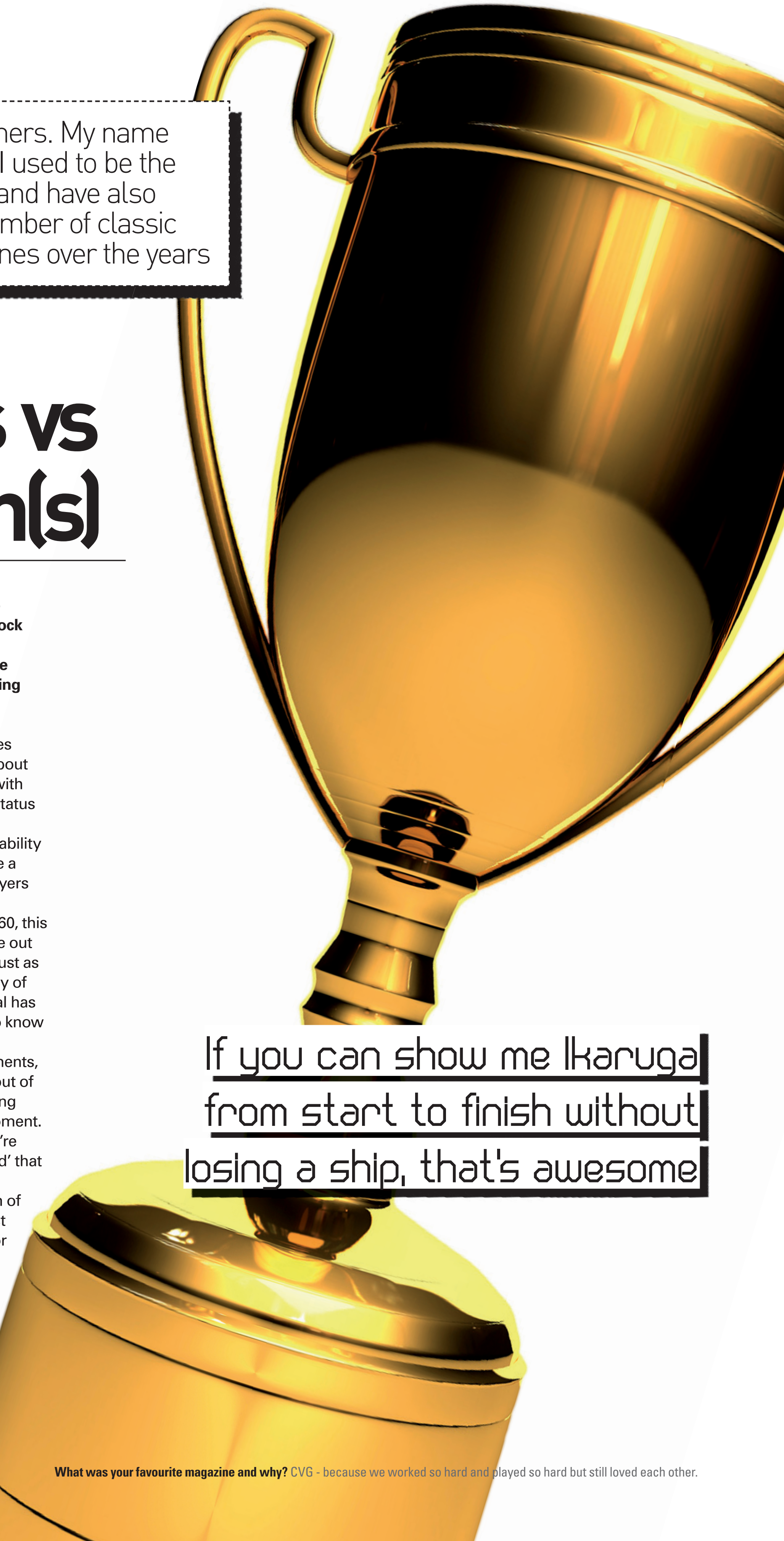


» [CPC] It's not as pretty, but at least it can't be accused of racism.

Here's my bio…
In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *C&VG*. I led the *C&VG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, then I left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.



Hello, retro gamers. My name is **Paul Davies**. I used to be the editor of C&VG and have also worked on a number of classic gaming magazines over the years



Achievements vs Congratulation(s)

The videogame thing really started around the late Seventies, which was about the same time that rock stars became larger than life and kids learned to skate or die… or break their skulls trying. We were living offline, emulating TV heroes in playgrounds or dressing like them at the disco. Meanwhile, the girls wore Bay City Roller socks and guys grew their hair and got high scores.

I think there was a 'time and place' thing that helped games become what they did as quickly as they did. It wasn't just about addiction; there was something of a performance involved with being good. Being freakishly skilled at games had a similar status to being slick at skateboard tricks.

Pitiful as it still may be to observers with loftier goals, the ability to rack up 'telephone number' high scores on *Pac-Man* while a crowd gathered in the arcade was part of the thrill. Great players were part of the attraction of visiting arcades.

When Microsoft introduced Achievements for the Xbox 360, this struck me as being kind of 'Orwellian'. I'm still trying to figure out whether or not Achievements (note the capital A) count for just as much as actual achievements, which I define as those worthy of being recognised by your peers. It's good to see that your pal has defeated Game X on Insane difficulty, but surely pointless to know that he's hacked at least one security camera.

Originally the thing that bugged me most about Achievements, and now PlayStation Trophies, is that it takes the humanity out of having fun. You could liken it to the world's top athletes having their performance monitored and fine-tuned using lab equipment. If you're watching a film or listening to music, imagine if you're getting Achievements to judge how fully you've 'experienced' that particular form of entertainment.

We've now got people treating their Gamerscore as a sign of greatness but really only playing games that will easily boost this. Not really enjoying the games, but being competitive for the sake of being competitive.

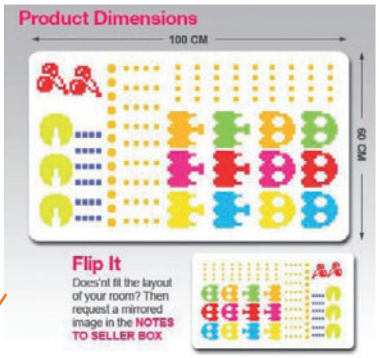
If you can show me *Ikaruga* from start to finish without losing a ship, that's awesome. Say you're good at *Street Fighter IV*? Let's see it. I didn't enjoy *Ico* but will always listen to somebody explain what it means to them, because it's a personal thing. Just don't give me games going through the motions, because that's horrible.

If you can show me Ikaruga from start to finish without losing a ship, that's awesome

What was your favourite magazine and why? CVG - because we worked so hard and played so hard but still loved each other.

Retro Booty

TREASURES FROM THE RETRO DEEP



Pac-Man Room Decoration

- **RRP:** £14.99
- **Manufacturer:** The Binary Box
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

If you want to go all-out with Pac-Man booty this month, why not treat your home to a Pac-Man tattoo? These wall transfers, sized 100cm x 60cm, will add colour and nostalgia to any room – including the bog.

Gauntlet T-shirt

- **RRP:** £14.95
- **Manufacturer:** Retro GT
- **Buy it from:** www.retrogt.com

How about complementing the Mario satchel (below) with this awesome new *Gauntlet* T-shirt from Retro GT? It features all four characters from the game and looks rather natty, if not incredibly geeky.





Pac-Man Plush Head

- **RRP:** $29.99 (approx £18)
- **Manufacturer:** Namco
- **Buy it from:** www.clubnamco.com

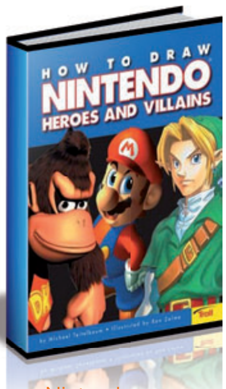
Look like a cross between Michael Schumacher and, er, Pac-Man in this peculiar Pac-Man plush head. When Darran spied this, his exact words were: "That's the greatest thing ever" – the rest of us remain unconvinced.

Sonic The Hedgehog Costume

- **RRP:** £43.94
- **Manufacturer:** Heroes For Kids
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

Every fancied being Sonic the Hedgehog? No, neither have we. However, if you do fall into this rather disturbing category, you may want to pick up this fancy dress costume. Turn up at a party dressed like this and your evening is sure to go swimmingly.





How To Draw Nintendo Heroes & Villains

- **RRP:** £3.36
- **Publisher:** Troll
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

Remember the sports almanac that Biff takes back in time and uses to make his millions in *Back To The Future: Part II*? Well, this book potentially has the same kind of power. Just construct a time machine, devour every page in this book and knock on Nintendo's door in 1977.



Super Mario Bros 3 Satchel Bag

- **RRP:** £8.95
- **Manufacturer:** Kapow Gifts
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

Look the epitome of geek chic – so we're told – with this *Super Mario Bros 3* satchel. It comes with an image of a blooper and Racoon Mario on the front – a pairing you wouldn't expect to work in the world of fashion, but it does. Oh, and it holds stuff too.



Sonic The Hedgehog Retractable Stylus Wands

- **RRP:** £8.99
- **Manufacturer:** Venom
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

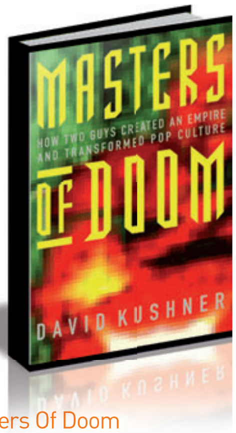
A great idea, this one. Retractable stylus wands for your DS that you can fasten to a keychain. These ones from Venom come in Sonic and Shadow designs.

Guess That Pokémon Game

- **RRP:** £9.99
- **Manufacturer:** Pressman Toy International Ltd
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

Everyone remembers Guess Who?, right? Well, some bright sparks at Pressman Toy International have applied the formula to the world of Pokémon and it works brilliantly.





Masters Of Doom

- **RRP:** £8.99
- **Publisher:** Random House Trade
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

Yes, we know it's been out for a while, but if you enjoyed last issue's *Wolfenstein 3D* Making Of and wanted to find out more about id Software, then you should really seek out *Masters Of Doom*. It's a fantastic book and gives great insight into the company.

TREASURE OF THE MONTH



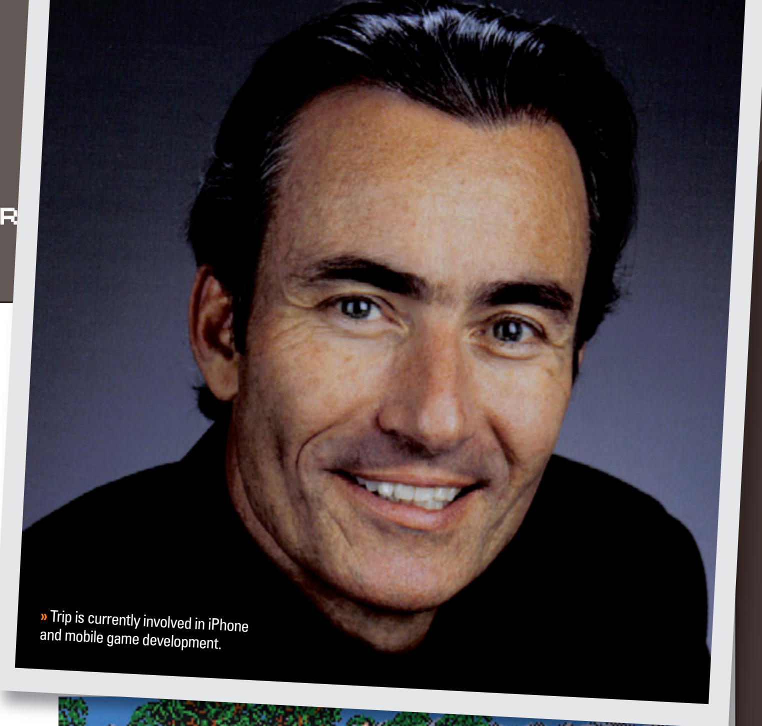
Retro Handheld

- **RRP:** $99.99 (approx £60)
- **Publisher:** ThinkGeek.com
- **Buy it from:** www.thinkgeek.com

This month's star pick comes in the form of the this natty-looking handheld from ThinkGeek.com. It's a neat little portable device that looks similar in design to a Game Boy Micro, and lets you play emulators, audio and even movie files. As well as looking nice and sleek, this six-button handheld comes with 4GB worth of space to store files, USB and a miniSD slot to make transferring files over from your computer a doddle. We have one coming our way so expect a full review next issue hopefully.

retroradar

» GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE R



» Trip is currently involved in iPhone and mobile game development.

* A MOMENT WITH...

Trip Hawkins

Every issue we'll be speaking to industry legends. This month we had a chinwag with Electronic Arts founder Trip Hawkins

Who is Trip Hawkins?

Trip's the industry veteran who founded Electronic Arts, one of the world's largest videogame publishers. He's also responsible for the ahead of its time 3DO and is currently the owner of Digital Chocolate, which specialises in iPhone and mobile games.

If you could recommend one of your games for readers to play, what would it be and why?
Crazy Penguin Catapult. Using medieval catapults you fling helmeted kamikaze penguins into polar bear strongholds and knock them out in a pinball-machine fashion. It's funny, with a great combination of action and puzzle elements.

What's your proudest achievement?
I got a lot of resistance and criticism during the decade I was planning the foundation of Electronic Arts. After founding EA it took another decade of hard work and struggle against the tides to really get the company established. Now that EA is really big and everyone is playing computer games, I'm really satisfied that I stuck with it and stayed true to the phrase, 'Illegitimi non carborundum'.

So what's the most difficult thing you've encountered while working on a game?
The original *Madden Football* was supposed to take one year to develop and with the usual things going wrong it still should have been done in two. Yet it took four years and became known around EA as 'Trip's Folly'.

Which other industry veteran do you must admire and why?
Shigeru Miyamoto. He's been so consistently innovative and his design sensibilities and viewpoint about consumers agree with mine, even though I could not have invented what he invented. Hence, I appreciate him all the more as a customer.

How would you like your games to be remembered?
For being a new art form that is the most fun way to learn and socialise, and that provided key ideas that galvanised the industry to become a part of society.

What game do you wish you had made?
The tower defence genre. It's a wonderful type of game that reflects how I think and I'm just jealous that I didn't think of it. I'm not sure who deserves credit, but I intend to contribute to the genre in the future.

What opportunities have making games given you?
When you get to work with cool people who share your ideas, and you get to help them develop and see their success.

> "I'm jealous that I didn't think of the tower defence genre"
> TRIP HAWKINS



» [Mega Drive] Even before Tiger Woods, EA was making great PGA golf games.

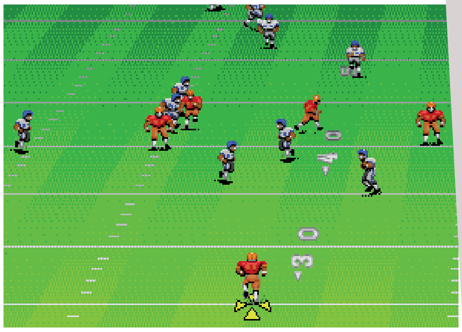


What's your darkest moment?
Several! I considered dropping out of college because my advisor told me to "stop monkeying around with games". There were many times that I was afraid that EA and I would go broke. I was trying to help the industry with the 3DO and yet got heaped with scorn. That said, I have been blessed and very lucky, and I have no regrets.

And your best?
Any time I play any of my games with any of my four children and see joy on their faces, especially when they find a way to beat me.

Can you tell us one interesting anecdote about your time in the industry?
I used to work for Steve Jobs and he came into my office one day and said, "Hey, Trip, you've never taken LSD, have you?" And I said no. And he smiled and walked away muttering, "Yeah, I thought so." I think I was being rebuked for some case of what he felt was thinking in too much of a straight line.

So how has the industry changed over the last 20 years?
I see this incredible change in just the last five years as we have gone from a global market of 100 million hardcore gamers to an audience of billions of omni-gamers. Finally, everyone is playing computer games in one form or another. We did it! *

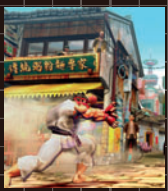




retrodiary

17 July – 13 August

» A month of retro events both past and present



18 July 2008
■ *Street Fighter IV*, the latest in Capcom's highly regarded fighting series, appears in Japan as a coin-op arcade game.



19 July 1985
■ Ocean releases *Frankie Goes To Hollywood*, a licensed product based on the band, on Spectrum. An original yet truly bizarre game.



20 July 1983
■ WH Smith announced that it would no longer continue to stock software for Clive Sinclair's ZX81 home computer.



20 July 1991
■ Dixons slashes the price of Amstrad's GX4000 to £19. Dixons' buying director said: "We're getting out of it." Good move.



22 July 1985
■ *Thing On A Spring* is released on C64 by Gremlin Graphics. A colourful cheery offering enhanced by Rob Hubbard's catchy tunes.



21 July 1995
■ Nintendo's Virtual Boy is officially released in Japan, with the US release following on 14 August. This remains Nintendo's biggest console failure to date.



21 July 1989
■ Nintendo's monochromatic handheld Game Boy console is released in America. It comes with *Tetris*, and millions of units are sold.



21 July 1982
■ Atari parent company Warner Communications announced it had acquired exclusive rights to the movie *ET: The Extra Terrestrial*. Better get those spades out…



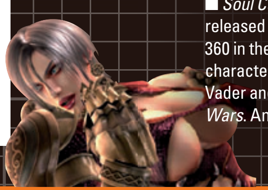
24 July 1985
■ In America, Commodore reveals the first in its series of Amiga computers, the A1000. It would set you back around $1,300.



28 July 1994
■ In the UK, *Super Metroid* arrives for the SNES, unifying magazine reviewers and gamers alike in extolling the virtues of one of the SNES's greatest games.



31 July 2009
■ The second instalment of *Sam & Max* finally hits the Wii. Don't miss it.



1 August 2008
■ *Soul Calibur IV* is released on PS3 and 360 in the UK. Guest characters include Darth Vader and Yoda from *Star Wars*. And Ivy's still here.



11 August 1993
■ The 118 Meg fighting game *Samurai Shodown* (or *Samurai Spirits* in Japan) is released by SNK on the Neo Geo AES console.



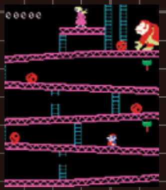
07 August 2009
■ Classic lightgun action as the *Mad Dog Mcree* games get re-released on the Wii.



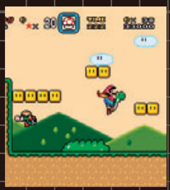
6 August 1999
■ The Neo Geo Pocket Color handheld console produced by SNK goes on sale in America. It was released in Japan five months earlier.



5 August 1994
■ Earthworm Jim, a platform game with plenty of shooting, was released in the UK on Sega's Mega Drive. Eat dirt, nefarious evildoer.



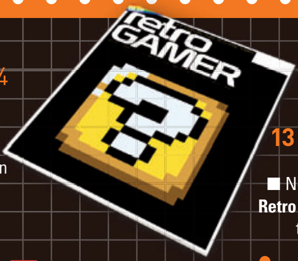
13 August 1982
■ The Colecovision console debuts in the US and initially sells well thanks to *Donkey Kong*, which came free with the machine.



13 August 1991
■ Those lucky American types got to see *Super Mario World* on SNES nine whole months before Europeland.



13 August 2004
■ Developed by id Software and published by Activision, first-person shooter *Doom 3* is released in the UK on PC.



13 August 2009
■ New issue of **Retro Gamer** hits the streets.

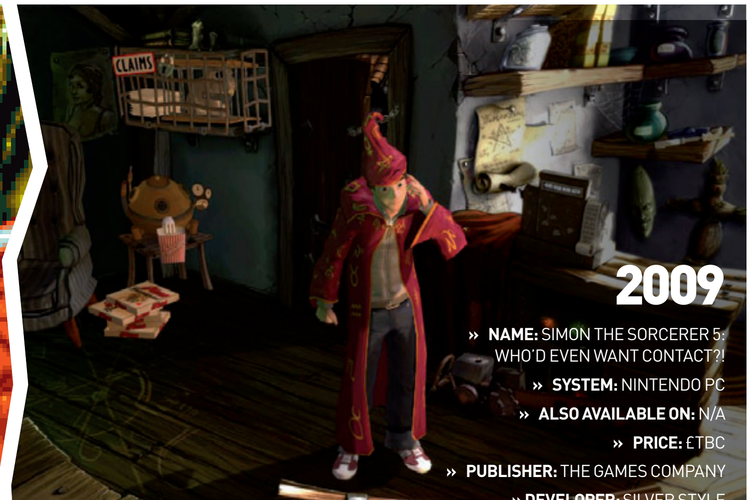
Retro Evolution

Looking at the classic franchises being revived for a new generation of gamers



1993

- » **NAME:** SIMON THE SORCERER
- » **SYSTEM:** PC
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** AMIGA, CD32
- » **PRICE:** £29.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** ADVENTURE SOFT
- » **DEVELOPER:** ADVENTURE SOFT
- » **PLAYERS:** 1



2009

- » **NAME:** SIMON THE SORCERER 5: WHO'D EVEN WANT CONTACT?!
- » **SYSTEM:** NINTENDO PC
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **PRICE:** £TBC
- » **PUBLISHER:** THE GAMES COMPANY
- » **DEVELOPER:** SILVER STYLE ENTERTAINMENT
- » **PLAYERS:** 1

Simon The Sorcerer

The History Lesson

Conceived by Sutton Coldfield-based developer Adventure Soft, Simon The Sorcerer is one of the most popular, successful and humorous point-and-click adventure series ever to grace home computers.

Adventure Soft Publishing had an established background in developing horror-based point-and-click games, releasing the games *Elvira*, *WaxWorks* and *Personal Nightmare* then under the name HorrorSoft. After a time, however, the company decided to set its sights on the adventure-comedy genre instead and changed its name to suit the transition.

After trying, unsuccessfully, to persuade Terry Pratchett to grant them permission to develop a *Discworld* game, Adventure Soft conjured up its own adventure game, and *Simon The Sorcerer* was the result. Released for Amiga and PC in 1993, and CD32 a year later, *Simon The Sorcerer* charted the amusing tale of a teenager who gets transported to a fantasy realm and tasked with saving the good wizard, Calypso, from the clutches of the evil one, the recurring antagonist Sordid.

Originally voiced by actor Chris Barrie – best remembered as uptight hologram Arnold Rimmer in *Red Dwarf* – Simon the Sorcerer has appeared in a total of four adventure games, with a fifth currently in development. Simon's character and story was written by writer/designer Simon Woodroffe, who helped establish Adventure Soft with his father, Mike. Unlike LucasArts' popular point-and-click games, which utilised Ron Gilbert's SCUMM-engine, the first two *Simon The Sorcerer* titles worked from AGOS, a combination of point-and-click and a command panel interface that gave its games an echo of text adventures. This gave gamers a great sense of control over Simon and a real feeling of interaction with his fantastical and enchanting game world.

The series is also famed for its Pratchett-esque humour and the way its stories lampoon fairytales and nursery rhymes, and even include various pop-culture references. The games were wonderfully written and gained universal appeal among gamers both young and old, and its accessibility has allowed the series to amass a legion of devout followers.

The second game in the franchise, *Simon The Sorcerer II: The Lion, The Wizard And The Wardrobe*, was released in 1995, and although it sadly lacked Chris Barrie's vocal talents, most fans still consider the game an improvement over the original. As its title suggests, the game was a play on the title of the CS Lewis novel *The Lion, The Witch And The Wardrobe*. *Simon II* stuck to the same point-and-click formula as before, and even upped the ante with regard to the jokes and humour, lampooning everything from fast-food giant McDonald's to classic time-travelling flick *Back To The Future*. It was also, the final Simon the Sorcerer game to be released for the Amiga.

Following the release of *Simon II: The Lion The Wizard And The Wardrobe*, Adventure Soft quickly

* What we think



I've only just got into this series thanks to Gog.com, so if this new game captures the brilliance of the original 2D efforts then I say bring it on. What with this and *Monkey Island*, the point-and-click adventure is well and truly back.

* What we think



I'm not that familiar with the series. My only experience is watching my mate play it on his Amiga years ago. That said, I like the look of the new game, and if Silver Style can recapture the wit of the first two, I'm sure this'll be a winner.

Simon The Sorcerer Timeline

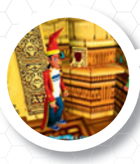
Simon The Sorcerer
YEAR RELEASED: 1993
SYSTEM: AMIGA, PC, CD32



Simon The Sorcerer 2
YEAR RELEASED: 2001
SYSTEM: AMIGA, PC, MAC



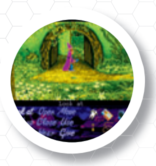
Simon The Sorcerer 3D
YEAR RELEASED: 2002
SYSTEM: PC



Simon The Sorcerer 4
YEAR RELEASED: 2008
SYSTEM: PC



Simon The Sorcerer 5
YEAR RELEASED: 2009
SYSTEM: PC



What's Changed?

The new additions that weren't in the original game

THEN: The original used the AGOS engine, which used a combination of point-and-click and a command panel interface.



NOW: The new title is a 3D point-and-click adventure, and like *Simon 3* and *4*, drops the 'walk to, look at' panel bar.

THEN: The original Simon the Sorcerer was voiced by actor Chris Barrie, of *The Brittas Empire* and *Red Dwarf* fame.



NOW: Silver Style understands how important getting Simon's voice right is, and assures us they're on the case for the UK release.

THEN: The first game was set in a colourful fantasy world with wizards, dragons, maidens, mummies, gnomes and billy goats.



NOW: The new game begins in the future with an amnesiac Simon travelling back through time trying to piece together his memory.

expanded. However, it soon found itself struggling under the weight of more staff, which took its toll on the company. After closing its doors in 1998, Adventure Soft later re-opened under the name Headfirst Productions and began work on a third Simon the Sorcerer game with the hopes of rekindling the magic.

Simon The Sorcerer 3 started out life as a 2D point-and-click adventure. After falling victim to long delays, however, its development spilled over into a period when game visuals were beginning to make the move towards 3D. The title was subsequently rebuilt in three dimensions at the publisher's request, and the name was changed to *Simon The Sorcerer 3D*. While the game did capture the franchise's whimsical spirit, Headfirst had little inexperience in the realm of 3D, and with just nine months to completely rebuild the game, it failed to achieve the high standards of the previous two games in the series.



What we think

The original game is one of my favourite adventures ever, but the series has since gone downhill. With *Monkey Island* now back in action, *Simon The Sorcerer 5* has to be much funnier to prove that it still deserves to exist.

The rights to *Simon The Sorcerer* were eventually sold to Silver Style Entertainment in Germany, who later released *Simon The Sorcerer 4: Chaos Happens* in 2007 on PC. Woodroffe worked alongside the company as a consultant on the game. Consisting of a mash-up of game styles, the fourth game saw a return to the point-and-click interface used in the first two games, but kept the characters and look of the 3D title.

Still in the hands of Silver Style, the latest Simon the Sorcerer game, *Simon The Sorcerer 5: Who'd Even Want Contact?!*, sees the wizard mixing with extra terrestrials. The game puts Simon in a new futuristic world as he travels back through the ages to recover his memory, meeting plenty of familiar faces along the way.

Like *Chaos Happens*, *Who'd Even Want Contact?!* retains the point-and-click interface and three-dimensional visuals but is also said to add vehicles and even more mind-bending puzzles. Currently scheduled for release in the UK this summer, and already on sale in Germany, we spoke to the team behind the game to find out a little more about this latest time-twisting adventure for the young wizard.

THE PROBING QUESTIONS

We speak to publisher TGC's Benjamin Bezold about Simon 5



How will this fifth outing differ from the previous Simon games?
The fifth part is the most technically advanced of the series so far. For example, we have enhanced the engine with features like normal mapping and given the characters a modern cel-shaded look. On the other hand, *Simon 5* is much easier to get to grips with than the first instalments. And we are supporting gamers with a quest journal that has its own integrated hint system. Also, for the first time you'll be leaving the fairytale world to discover new scenarios like space or the Caribbean Sea.

Who is voicing Simon this time around and what will he bring to the character?
The English voices are not done yet, but we are aware how important good voice acting is for Simon. Therefore, I assure fans that we will try our best to give Simon a charismatic voice. In the German version, Simon is spoken by the person who voiced the character in all the other games in the franchise.

What will you be doing to ensure that fans of the original will be happy?
We are trying to bring the unique humour of the first parts back to life. So you will encounter dozens of funny jokes and various pop-culture references. Moreover, the riddles are as crazy as those in the beginning of the series.

What's your favourite game in the Simon The Sorcerer series and why? And you can't say this one.
I enjoyed the first part the most, especially because of the fascinating wood worms. I've never seen such crazy characters in a game before. Even though they returned in part two, they had their best appearance in *Simon 1*.

What is your all-time favourite adventure game and why?
Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade is my all-time favourite adventure game. It had a great atmosphere and a good mixture of challenging puzzles and thrilling action sequences.



Why do you think the franchise remains so popular today?
Simon the Sorcerer is one of the oldest gaming characters and he has a huge fan base throughout the whole of the world. He could easily compete with other characters like Lara Croft, Larry Laffer or Guybrush Threepwood and handle a whole game on his own.

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

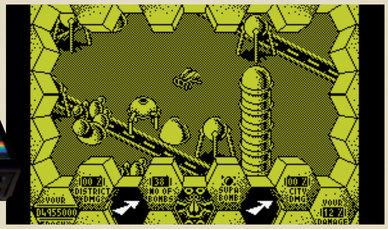
THE LATEST NEWS FROM MAY 1987



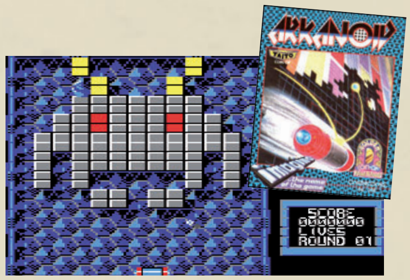
MAY 1987 – disky business for Amstrad, Amiga on show at Show, Codemasters slays Goliath, Magic Knight takes a bow, Flunky goes large, Silent Service goes AWOL and Anglia TV has a Knightmare. Donning the Helmet Of Justice, Richard Burton walks into a wall



» Amstrad's new Spectrum incorporated a three-inch disk drive. A vast improvement over those dodgy microdrives.



» [ZX Spectrum] *Amaurote*: Mastertronic, the maestro of cheap software, unveils this superb 3D game.



» [C64] *Arkanoid*: Ball, wall, bat, ball, now with added power ups and new improved shootiness. *Breakout* comes of age.

Amstrad's new Spectrum, the disc-based 128K Plus 3, made its debut at the bizarrely titled Brown Goods Exhibition in London towards the end of May. The new machine, which contained Sir Sugar's disk format of choice, the three-inch disk, would set you back £249 when it was officially released in July. Early reviews of the system were mixed…

Also previewed before official launch was Commodore's Amiga 500, which surfaced on 12 June at the Commodore Show. Pricing was the only pitfall for the Amiga. While its capabilities dazzled, the price, including the 1,081 colour monitor, was just shy of £1,000. Atari's 520STFM with a similar setup cost £599.

It was big company versus new boy in the news with American software giant Activision getting the hump over a Codemasters release. Activision felt Codies' budget smash *Grand Prix Simulator* was too similar to its own top-down arcade racing game *Super Sprint*. Activision threatened Codemasters with a High Court injunction citing that *Grand Prix Simulator* was guilty of copyright infringement and that it would sue for damages. *Grand Prix Simulator*, as it turned out, was actually a racing-car version of Codies' *BMX Simulator*. Activision reluctantly withdrew its claim and *Grand Prix Simulator* went on to sell by the bucket load, amassing estimated sales of over 250,000 units.



» The marvellous *Knightmare* bringing the worlds of RPG and kids' television together. It's about time they brought it back…

Activision redeemed itself through its UK division and Rod Cousens, with reports it was planning a charity compilation of games in aid of the NSPCC. The ten-game collection, entitled *Kidsplay*, featured a host of top-drawer titles, including Ultimate's *Lunar Jetman*, Gremlin Graphic's *Monty On The Run* and Melbourne House's *Starion*, and was available on the Spectrum with C64 and Amstrad collections following soon after.

Due out imminently was the third and final chapter in David Jones's *Magic Knight* trilogy. In *Stormbringer*, the Magic Knight attempted to make himself whole after getting split into two characters by a defective time machine. He must find his alter ego, the *Stormbringer*, and become one again. Yes, it was similar to *Knight Tyme*, but for £2.99 on the Mastertronic MAD label, you got a cracking graphic adventure and an excellent finale to the trio of games.

Piranha Software and Don Priestley revealed their collaboration on a game called *Flunky* due later in the year. Having previously joined forces to release *The Trap Door* (a superb cartoon-like arcventure based on the children's TV show), Priestley's trademark large animated character systems were employed once again in *Flunky*, in which you wander around Buckingham Palace solving tasks.

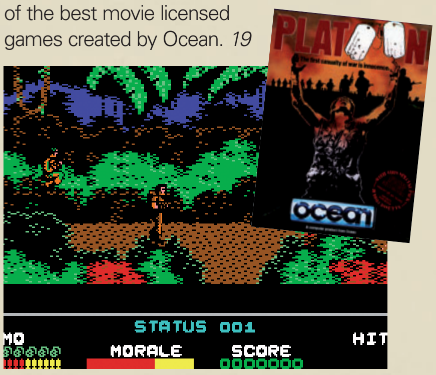


» [CPC 464] *Stormbringer*: The third and final helping of *Magic Knight* proved to be a fitting end to the trilogy.

In West Germany there was a severe case of humour by-pass with news that MicroProse's excellent submarine simulation *Silent Service* had been banned in the country for being realistic. Don't mention the war. I did once, but I think I got away with it.

A war that *was* deemed fit for gaming consumption was the conflict in Vietnam. Three games were in development: Ocean's licence to the movie *Platoon*, and Cascade (of the dodgy *Cassette 50* compilation) was also creating two games based on Paul Hardcastle's number-one song *19*, which referred to the average age of American combat soldiers in Vietnam.

Platoon turned out to be a splendid game, testing yet atmospheric and arguable one of the best movie licensed games created by Ocean. *19*



» [C64] *Platoon*: An excellent movie tie-in. Man, we love the smell of digitised napalm in the morning (with my Coco Pops).

1987

MAY NEWS



» Want to get yourself in a heap of Red trouble? Why not try landing a plane outside the Kremlin.

On 28 May, West-German teenager Mathias Rust flew a single-engine Cessna plane across Soviet airspace, eventually landing the aircraft near the Kremlin in Red Square. The 19 year old was promptly arrested. On 2 September he was put on trial and sentenced to four years in a Soviet labour camp. He served 432 days before being released. Rust created quite a queue at the Moscow Job Centre that day, because many people lost their jobs, including both the Air Defence and Defence ministers, as well as the 2,000 officers serving under them who were also dismissed for incompetence.

Another court case began on 11 May when Klaus Barbie was put on trial for crimes against humanity during WWII. The former SS officer and Gestapo chief had been posted to Lyon in 1942 where he was associated with over four thousand murders and 14,000 cases of torture against resistance fighters. He gained the epithet the Butcher of Lyon for his actions. On 4 July, aged 73, he was sentenced to life in prison. He served four years before dying of cancer.



» Keith Houchen's flying headed goal didn't win the FA Cup for Coventry. Gary Mabbutt's kneecap did though…

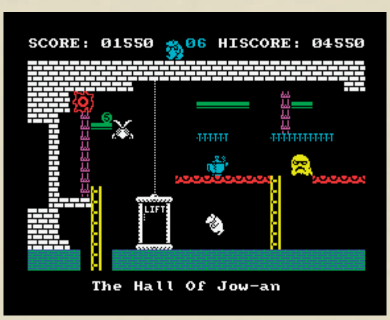
16 May marked a memorable FA Cup Final at Wembley. Unfancied Coventry City took on favourites Tottenham Hotspur and won 3-2. Coventry's second goal was a tremendous flying header by Keith Houchen.



» [ZX Spectrum] *Flunky*: The big sprites can only mean one thing – Don Priestley has a new game out.

didn't fair as well. The first of the two parts was *19 Part One: Boot Camp*, which was a combat school-style effort that didn't hit the mark. *Part Two: Combat Zone*, which would have taken you into the war zone, never appeared as Cascade went into liquidation shortly after *Part One* hit the streets.

TV and RPG gaming collided with great effect when Anglia TV announced it was making a children's TV show that would feature dungeon exploration and quests in a Virtual Reality style set-up. Produced by Broadsword, *Knightmare* swayed away from on-screen computer-generated backdrops and plumped for realistic airbrushed backgrounds that the contestants could "explore". The artist behind those creations was David Rowe, inlay artist to many a top-selling game, including Quicksilva classic *Ant Attack*. *Knightmare* was a great success and ran for eight series.



» [ZX Spectrum] *Kidsplay*: *Monty On The Run* was just one tenth of a tremendous charity compilation set up to help the NSPCC.

Computer & Video Games reviewers were doling out C&VG Hit awards to May's software releases. The two Games Of The Month were *Arkanoid* (Imagine, C64) and *Enduro Racer* (Activision, Spectrum) with Hits going to *Ranarama* (Hewson, C64), *Head Over Heels* (Ocean, Amstrad), *Warlock* (The Edge, Amstrad), *Leaderboard* (US Gold, Spectrum), *Atari Hits 7* (English Software, Atari XL/XE), *Magic Madness* (Anco, C64), *The Sydney Affair* (Infogrames, Spectrum), *Hollywood Hijinx* (Infocom/Activision, C64) and *The Serf's Tale* (Players, Spectrum).

Amstradian's had to look to Amstrad Action after the recent demise of Newsfield's *Amtix!* for their latest gaming assessments. AA's reviewers decided that *Head Over Heels* (Ocean) was the top game – the Mastergame – and rightly so. The next rank down in gaming excellence, the AA Raves were *Pulsator* (Martech), *Shockway Rider* (Faster Than Light), *Sigma 7* (Durell) and *Mercenary* (Novagen).

There wasn't much to shout about for C64 gamers in *Zzap's* pages with *Into The Eagle's Nest* (Pandora) and *Hollywood Hijinx* (Infocom/Activision) being the only Sizzlers. The occasional Past Blaster award, given to aged games that could still hold their own went to *Impossible Mission* (US Gold/Epyx).

THIS MONTH IN…

LM



Issue 4 of *LM* was to be the last. The lifestyle magazine once again had a right old mish-mash of articles attempting to cover everything, but targeting no one. They ranged from fencing, taxidermy, hitchhiking and a look back at the banned Stanley Kubrick film *A Clockwork Orange*. And with that, *LM* was gone…



COMPUTER GAMER



Bane Of The Month, for the worst game reviewed, was for *FA Cup '87* by Virgin. Not only was the game awful, but it was also almost identical to *FA Cup '86* released the previous year. Was Virgin being lazy or simply pioneering the rehashed game manoeuvre as perfected later by EA and *FIFA*?



SINCLAIR USER



SU looked at licensed and endorsed games highlighting the God-awfulness of most of them. Such gaming catastrophes to hit the Spectrum were *3-2-1* (with Dusty Bin), *Minder*, *Flash Gordon* and a whole host of 2000AD character-based games. Strangely, none of those were by Ocean or US Gold.



CHARTS

MAY 1987

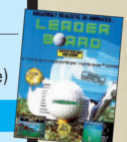
MUSIC

1 Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now (Starship)
2 Can't Be With You Tonight (Judy Boucher)
3 A Boy From Nowhere (Tom Jones)
4 Living In A Box (Living In A Box)
5 (Something Inside) So Strong (Labi Siffre)



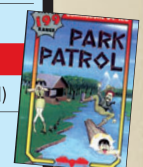
SPECTRUM

1 Leaderboard (US Gold)
2 Bomb Jack II (Elite)
3 Paperboy (Elite)
4 Olli And Lissa (Firebird)
5 Gauntlet (US Gold)



COMMODORE 64

1 Park Patrol (Firebird)
2 BMX Simulator (Codemasters)
3 Gunship (MicroProse)
4 LA Swat (Mastertronic)
5 Micro Rhythm (Firebird)



ATARI XE/XL

1 BMX Simulator (Codemasters)
2 Colony (Bulldog)
3 Green Beret (Imagine)
4 Gun Law (Mastertronic)
5 Silent Service (MicroProse)



BACK TO THE NINETIES

THE LATEST NEWS FROM JANUARY 1992



JANUARY 1992 – price cuts, new Sonics, new magazines, new Amiga and New Zealand Story, a squeeze of Lemming, A Link To The Past for the future and Street Fighter II on the horizon. Richard Burton takes a Dragon Punch to the mush…



» The lack of a numeric keypad made the low-level Amiga A300/A600 incompatible with several software packages.



» [Amiga] *Fire & Ice*: Although Graftgold turns its hand to cutesy platform games with aplomb, this was deceptively tricky to play.



» [Game Gear] *Sonic The Hedgehog*: Another adaption of Sega's money-maker is produced. It did play rather well though.

Sonic The Hedgehog got a new lease of life as Sega revealed it was packaging the successful game with its Mega Drive. Priced at a not unreasonable £129, it did wonders for Sega's bottom line. And to emphasise the blue one's pulling power, it also gleefully informed the press that the Game Gear was also getting a version.

Prospective Neo Geo AES owners got a boost with further price reductions to the mighty console. Although still only available in the UK via the grey import market, SNK's AES console averaged at £299. Unfortunately, the games were still around £120 each. If only Mastertronic had released a budget range for it…

Commodore's CDTV entertainment system must really have sold like a dog. The system that couldn't decide on a target audience finally succumbed to a much-needed price drop from £599.99 to £499.99. Even at the new price, the future of the system was looking bleak.

Commodore also reported that it was in the process of adding a brand new Amiga to its ever-expanding family of micros. The newest potential member was the Amiga A300, a smaller, low-end version of the A500 that could be purchased for around the £399 mark and would be available within a few months.

Although Commodore of course denied this, the reports weren't completely fabricated. The A300 eventually became the A600 and replaced the A500+ as the junior member of the Amiga family. Lamentably, the project was rushed out and Commodore completely misjudged the entry point for the machine with the price mirroring the more powerful A500 and costing the same as the heavyweight A1200, which was released later in the year.

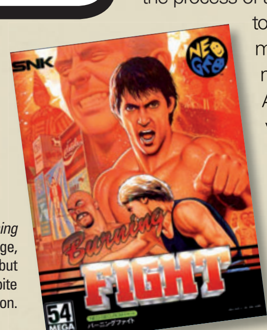
Its position in the grand scheme of Commodore things was vague at best. With better-spec machines available in its own range for the same price, it was essentially competing against other Amiga's for sales. Needless to say it didn't last long and was discontinued in 1993.

Europress Impact, the publisher who took the meatier parts of Newsfield Publications when it went into liquidation, saw the first issue of its new magazine *Sega Force* hit newsstands this month. *Sega Force* was originally the brainchild of Newsfield and had been at the planning stages before their financial situation got the better of them. Still, when Europress took the title as part of the fire sale, it also kept a selection of former Newsfield employees including Roger Kean and Oliver Frey.

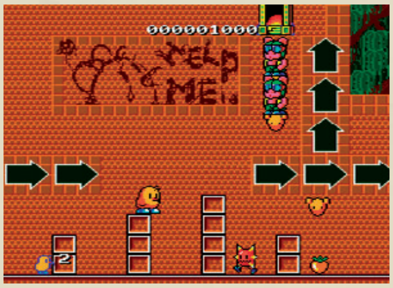
There was also another new magazine out this month in the form of *Commodore Power* published by Comag. Most of the staff were survivors of *Your Commodore*, which had recently ceased publication with the demise of its own publisher.

The cutesy platform game theme of recent months was prolonged further with news that TecMagik was converting Taito's arcade classic *The New Zealand Story* to Master System. The scrolling platform game featuring Tiki the kiwi rescuing his friends, would also be available on Mega Drive, NES and a host of home micros thanks to Ocean Software's porting abilities.

There was more cuteness to come with Andrew Braybrook, Graftgold supremo and the coder behind Ocean's Amiga version of *Rainbow Islands*, with his new platform game *Fire And Ice* starring Cool Coyote. Although it had a *Sonic The Hedgehog* feel to it, its own style and playability shone through



» [Neo Geo AES] *Burning Fight*: 54 Megs of cartridge, £120 worth of gaming, but it wasn't that great despite *C&VG*'s recommendation.



» [SMS] *The New Zealand Story*: Great game, nice graphics and a storyline featuring a family of Kiwis kidnapped by a walrus.

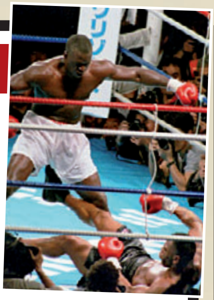


» [NES] *Star Wars*: Great level variation includes skimming along the Tatooine deserts avoiding Banthas. Excellent it is.

1992

JANUARY NEWS

6 January saw a setback for small-breasted American women. The US Food and Drug Administration was recommending that the use of silicone in breast implants be discontinued after fears that they could leak causing illness. The makers of the implants couldn't provide evidence to disprove the theory and even now the use of silicone has been suspended for all but reconstructive surgery. Britain dismissed the scaremongering, and girls here can gad about with silicone-filled breasts (although saline-filled implants are also available).


» Tyson is getting battered about the ring. Now he's off to prison.

And from fun-bags to punch-bags… On 27 January "Iron" Mike Tyson took on his hardest opponent yet – the US Justice System. Accused of raping Desiree Washington, a 1991 Miss Black America contestant, he found himself in the dock, facing a three-year prison sentence. On 10 February he was found guilty and went to jail. He returned to boxing in 1995.

An array of UK film premieres brought in the New Year, including *Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey*, *JFK*, *Delicatessen* and *Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare*, which refers to the last (at that time) Freddy Krueger slash-fest and not the recent passing of rock band Queen's flamboyant frontman who died two months earlier.


» What a lovely pair of tits…



» [Super Famicom] *Street Fighter II*: An early look at the all-new E Honda, Chun-Li et al for those jammy Japanese gamers.




» [Super Famicom] *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past*: One of the best games ever…

to make for an entertaining platform game. It was available on Amiga, Atari ST and Master System with the Amiga CD32 owners getting a look in too.

There was good news for fans of *Street Fighter II* when Capcom announced it had completed converting its massively successful arcade game to the SNES. It was envisaged that it would take six months to develop, with a debut planned in Japan around June.

Another hugely popular game receiving the console conversion treatment was *Lemmings*. With a version on most home micros, Psygnosis thought it was time for the SNES brigade to save the green-haired creatures. It would be available within a few weeks with further console versions available later in the year. Again, Ocean Software would have a hand in the projects with Sunsoft helping develop the games.

If punching someone in the face or nuking little animals wasn't your thing then maybe a spot of adventuring would sway you. For *Zelda* fans there was the trouser stiffening news that *Zelda: A Link To The Past* would soon be coming to US and UK shores.

After taking Japan by storm in November, the third instalment of *The Legend Of Zelda* series looked to continue the trend and would do so emphatically. When it finally appeared in April (US) and September (UK), it was hailed as one of the greatest videogames ever. Sadly, only Super Famicom/SNES owners would get to savour the wonders of *Zelda III*.

Computer & Video Games was impressed with *Rolling Thunder 2* (Namco, Mega Drive), *Smash TV* (Ocean, Amiga), *Donald Duck: The Lucky Dime Caper* (Sega, Master System), *Burning Fight* (SNK, Neo Geo) and *Robocop 3* (Ocean, Amiga) all grabbing the sparsely strewn C&VG Hit awards this month.

Being Hero'd by Zero were *Another World* (Delphine/US Gold, Amiga), *Heimdall* (Core Design, Amiga), *Spellcasting 201: The Sorcerer's Appliance* (Sierra, PC), *Birds Of Prey* (Electronic Arts, Amiga), *Alien Breed* (Team 17, Amiga), *Mike Ditka's Ultimate Football* (Accolade, PC), *Robocop 3* (Ocean, Amiga/ST), *Quest & Glory* (Ubisoft, Amiga/ST), *Populous* (Star Performers, Amiga), *Stunt Car Racer* (Kixx, Amiga), *Head Over Heels* (The Hit Squad, Atari ST) and *4D Sports Boxing* (Mindscape, Amiga).

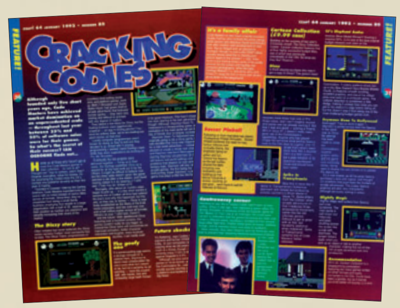
The console-loving *Mean Machines* was busily handing out Mega Games awards to *Star Wars* (Lucasfilm, NES), *Smash TV* (Acclaim, NES) and *Super Castlevania IV* (Konami, Super Famicom).

THIS MONTH IN... CHARTS



ZZAP!

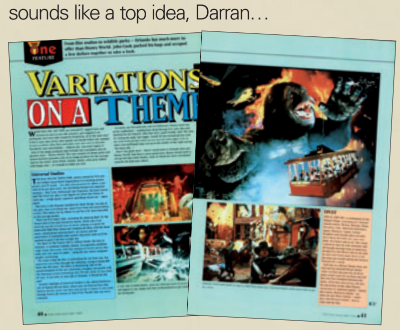
The Darlings at Codies were spilling the beans on how they went from small software company to large software developer. Strangely, they refused the idea of a Dizzy game until the Oliver twins wrote it secretly while working on another title. Put your hands together and give the twins a standing ovulation.

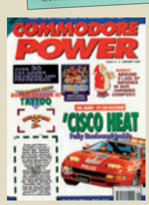




THE ONE: AMIGA

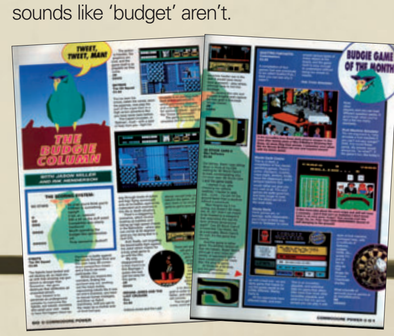
Variations On A Theme – an oddly placed feature if there ever was one. Quite why *The One* decided to review a holiday to Florida is anyone's guess. Maybe it was an excuse for a jolly away from the office. Actually, the latter sounds like a top idea, Darran…





COMMODORE POWER

It's new out and it's already got a dodgy feature. The Budgie Column reviewed new budget games. Reviews are good. Reviews with a dubious-looking sunglasses-wearing budgie stamped all over them because 'budgie' sounds like 'budget' aren't.



JANUARY 1992

AMIGA

1 Lotus Turbo Challenge 2 (Gremlin)
2 Alien Breed (Team 17)
3 Mega-Lo-Mania (Sensible Software/ Imageworks)
4 Final Fight (US Gold)
5 Rugby: The World Cup (Domark)





ATARI ST

1 Mega-Lo-Mania (Sensible Software/ Imageworks)
2 Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker (Virgin)
3 Silent Service II (MicroProse)
4 Terminator 2 (Ocean)
5 Final Fight (US Gold)

GAME BOY

1 Super Mario Land (Nintendo)
2 Duck Tales (Disney/Capcom)
3 Robocop (Ocean)
4 F-1 Race (Nintendo)
5 Gremlins II: The New Batch (Sunsoft/Nintendo)



MUSIC

1 Bohemian Rhapsody/ These Are The Days Of Our Lives (Queen)
2 Goodnight Girl (Wet Wet Wet)
3 Everybody In The Place (The Prodigy)
4 Justified And Ancient (KLF Featuring Tammy Wynette)
5 Too Blind To See It (Kym Sims)



14

M.A.S.K.

BURNING RUBBER INSIDE AN EIGHTIES CARTOON!



- » **PUBLISHER:** GREMLIN GRAPHICS
- » **RELEASED:** 1987
- » **GENRE:** ACTION/RACING
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** CPC
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID

HISTORY



The forces of M.A.S.K. are under attack and your colleagues have been scattered through time. It's down to you, in your Thunderhawk car, to rescue them before it's too late.

The four time zones in *M.A.S.K.* – Boulder Hill, Prehistoric, Far Future and VENOM – are viewed from above, and each large landscape scrolls smoothly in eight directions as you begin your search. Your first mission is to activate your scanner. To do this you need to find all the key pieces and put them together, then you can begin your search for your missing agents. Scattered about the landscape are car repair kits, security keys and bombs, which not only destroy nearby enemy vehicles, but can also blast holes in obstacles to help you reach new areas.

The four time zones also have their own unique dangers. For example, in the Prehistoric zone pterodactyls drop rocks from above onto your car. You also need to watch out for snapping turtles, spitting volcanoes and running lava. The mechanical enemies in the game include tanks, jeeps, skimmers and helicopters, and each is wonderfully detailed and seems hell bent on stopping you from completing your mission.

Once you have located and picked up your missing agents, you then need to take them to the vortex, which will take you to the next time zone. Should you rescue all your missing comrades, you then need to destroy the VENOM base to finish the game. Three bombs are needed in order to do this, and in three separate stages.

M.A.S.K. is very colourful and well detailed on the CPC. You get a good tune before the game finishes loading and some decent sound effects while you play. The controls take a while to figure out, and if you die you also lose all your keys, which can be annoying. This was the first of three *M.A.S.K.* games on the 8-bit machines and probably the best produced out of all of them. There are creations of adventure, there are creations of combat, but there is no creation quite like *M.A.S.K.*

Want to appear in the magazine? Then be sure to upload your classic profiles at www.retrogamer.net





RETROBATE PROFILE

- » **NAME:** ASHLEY HODGETTS
- » **JOINED:** 29 AUGUST 2008
- » **LOCATION:** ON MY BOAT
- » **OCCUPATION:** NOT GIVEN
- » **FAVE GAME SYSTEM:** CPC

THE MAKING OF…



» Spy Hunter's cabinet side art. If we didn't know any better we'd swear that was Don Johnson in the middle…

SPY HUNTER

Front-mounted machine guns, oil slicks, smoke screens, guided missiles and aquamarine go-faster stripes – Q would have been proud. Mike Bevan talks to ex-Bally/Midway graphic artist Brian Colin about the finest arcade 007 homage ever made

A never-ending highway scattered with homicidal enemy agents, unreliable bridges, VW Beetles and unfortunate bikers. Scored by the unmistakable jazz-like riff of the Peter Gunn theme, Spy Hunter was the epitome of cool Eighties arcade gaming. A thinly veiled tribute to all things shaken, not stirred, in overhead-view racing form, those lucky enough to encounter the sit-down version in particular will vouch for the sheer exhilaration it generated.

Starring a lone coupé, the G-6155 Interceptor, locked in a desperate struggle for survival with assassins sporting switch-blade hubcaps, shotgun-toting sedans and even bomb-flinging helicopters, the odds were stacked against you. And unlike the indestructible Bond, players were more vulnerable with their three fleeting lives granted once the game shifted into its highest gear.

"I wasn't around at the game's conception," admits Brian Colin, one of four artists working on the project, alongside lead programmer Tom Leon and arcade hardware designer George Gomez. "When I joined, the basic controls were already functional… a simple car was moving left and right, and up and down… but little else."

Tom and George were fans of the Bond movies. Tellingly, the game's original background music was a version of Monty Norman's famous spy theme. Of course, licensing issues later called for an alternative soundtrack. Luckily, there didn't appear to be any way for the Fleming camp to put the dampers on re-creating generic 007-style gadgets and vehicles, as long as the team did not blatantly copy *Goldfinger*'s Aston Martin DB5 or specific details of the films.

Still, presenting a cinematic car chase on Eighties arcade hardware was daunting. The technology for sprite-based 3D racers like *OutRun* and *Chase HQ* was still a few years off, so taking Tom's "simple car" and placing it on scrolling 2D tarmac seemed the best solution. *Spy Hunter* was Bally/Midway's first crack at a scrolling arcade game, a genre still in its infancy at the time. The majority of releases back then were of the single or flick-screen variety.

During development, the team only had one prototype system, so Tom used it to code by day, while Jeff Nauman, the second programmer, had access to it at night. Being a slightly rushed, ad-hoc system meant it wasn't perfect for the job by any means. "I was told it was actually hardware scrolling, but since it was basically a specially modified afterthought to the existing hardware, it wasn't particularly good scrolling hardware," explains Brian.

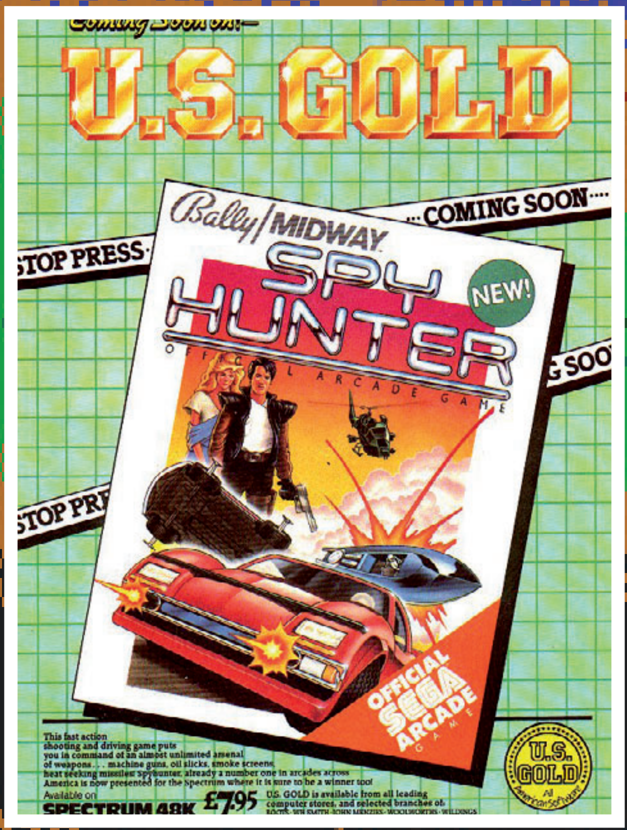
"This presented a set of unique challenges," he adds. "The 'background' was made up of lower-resolution, artificially elongated rectangles. Blending the hi-res foreground elements with the chunky background was a challenge, as was creating a slightly skewed top-down look for buildings, bridges and so on that managed to convey the necessary information in an interesting and aesthetically pleasing manner. As an artist who enjoys creating cartoony

IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHERS:** BALLY/MIDWAY
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **RELEASED:** 1983
- » **CONVERSION PLATFORMS:** APPLE II, ATARI VCS, ATARI 8-BIT, BBC MICRO, C64, SPECTRUM, NES, GBA
- » **GENRE:** DRIVE-'EM-UP
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £400+ (UPRIGHT CABINET) £500+ (SIT-DOWN CABINET)
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** DISCS OF TRON (1983) (PICTURED) RAMPAGE (1986) XENOPHOBE (1987)

» Discs Of Tron





FENDER AVENGER

Some videogame titles are so perfect it's difficult to imagine anything else ever being considered, and *Spy Hunter* evokes the over-the-top Eighties action-movie heritage of its gameplay brilliantly. It could have been very different, though. A handwritten memo – the results of a group brainstorming session for the game's title – reveals a list of abandoned names including the spectacularly rubbish *Spymobile*, the rather more amusing *Startkey & Clutch*, *Lead Foot And Road Reamer*, and *Dukes Of Tron*, a sly nod to Bally's previous hit *Discs Of Tron*. And we'd imagine that anyone who's ever been caught in a tailback on the M25 might appreciate the sentiment of the proposed *Rush-Hour Avenger*. We also like the sound of *Drunk Tank* – any game involving inebriated heavy armour sounds like a pretty good idea to us…

"As an artist who enjoys creating cartoony characters, the realistic nature of the game meant I had to exercise restraint"

THE MAKING OF... SPY HUNTER



» [Arcade] Despite the driving conditions, icy roads provide ample opportunity for oil-slick fun.



» [Arcade] Whoops… Sorry, mate, I didn't see you there.



characters [as seen in *Rampage*], the realistic nature of the game meant I had to exercise a bit more restraint."

"*Spy Hunter* was the ultimate evolution of the 'falling attacker' gameplay made popular in such games as *Space Invaders*, *Centipede*, and *Galaga*," Brian admits. It augments additional play tactics to the standard up-screen shooter, mixing in additional rear-firing weaponry in your smoke and oil attacks with the ability to collide with and aggressively smash enemy vehicles off the road.

"This part of the game was always intended to come straight out of the action movies that inspired it," says Brian. "Tom knew he needed to give players the ability to deal with side attacks in a way that required a bit of finesse. The tricky part was hitting other cars solidly with the side of your vehicle, but not so hard that you damaged your own car. Tom factored in speed variances, too, so you had to match the opponent's speed before slamming into them or you'd end up in a crumpled heap.

We also knew that the up-screen action had to be fairly easy to master, like shooting fish in a barrel, so we had to create an adversary [the bullet-proof Road Lord] that was immune to gunfire from behind and would need to be dealt with in an entirely different way. So once Tom created and refined the bumping motion of the player's vehicle, he added that ability to the AI vehicles as well."

Which brings us to the enemies. "These guys were always intended to be a part of the game," Brian reveals. "Certainly they were in the very first discussions… Tom's 'sideways bump' was devised so that players could defend against the tyre-slashing side-to-side attacks of these bad guys… so long as you avoided their nasty spinning knives."

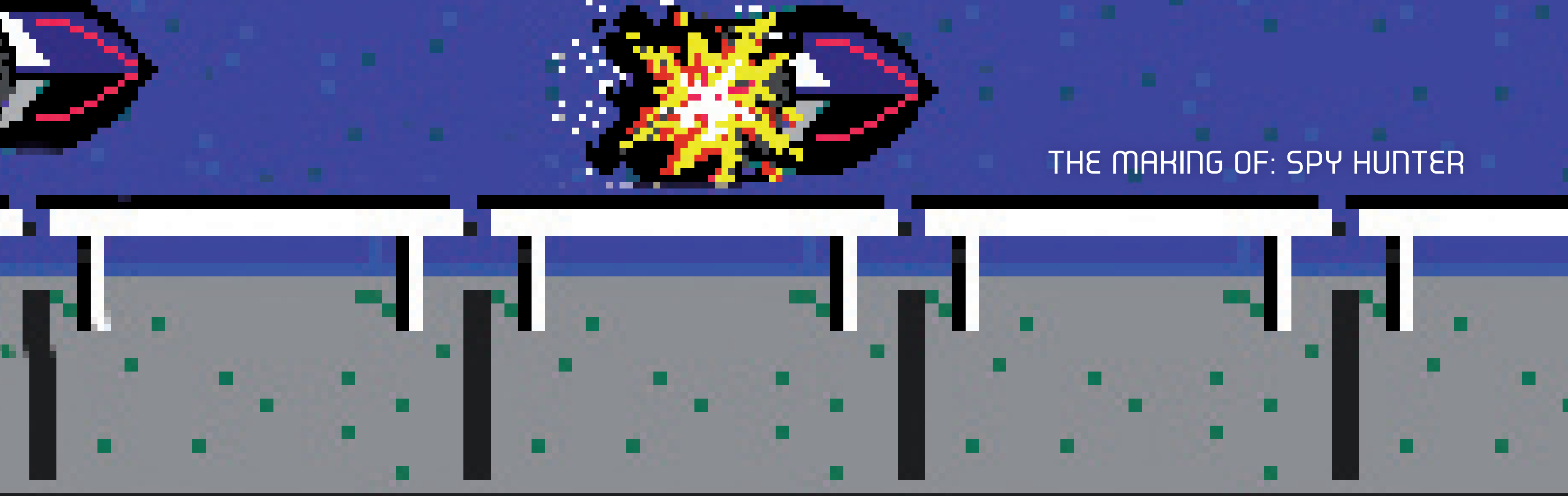
Despite the hit-and-run mayhem created by the Road Lord and his wheel-mashing cronies, civilians with family saloons, Beetle hatchbacks, and motorbikes often wander into your line of fire. Our operative must exercise caution to protect them, because shooting or bashing them off the road by 'mistake' plays havoc with the scoring. "You didn't actually lose points; you just stopped gaining additional points momentarily when an innocent was hit," says Brian. "It was important not to 'reward' indiscriminate vehicular homicide, regardless of how much fun it was."

The last of the trio of four-wheeled villains was created in order to address an in-game issue that had been bugging the team. "We had a problem," explains Brian. "After a crash, we couldn't really control where a player's vehicle might respawn, and we wanted to let him get up to speed before safely pulling back onto the road. So to be nice, we disabled initial off-road collisions after a new car was spawned. Players soon learned they could stay off-road indefinitely, effectively cheating the game. Rather than put off-road collisions back in, which would penalise the folks who didn't cheat, it was suggested that we create a vehicle that would slide up beside the cheaters and blow them away. Thus the Enforcer was born. He eventually made his way into normal gameplay as well."

Alongside those worthy adversaries and civilian bystanders, players can be thankful for one ally, another of the initial vehicles Brian remembers working on. In a move to give your machine-gun-toting sports car the upper hand later in the game, supplementary equipment in the form of smoke screens, oil slicks and missiles can be picked up via the Weapons Van. Performing the cinematic feat of negotiating a ramp at full tilt into its belly offers the added bonus of a brief respite from the high-speed carnage.

"There was a lot of tuning on this game element," recalls Brian. "It sounded simple, but positioning the Weapons Van in front of the player's vehicle was not easy. Tom had to… anticipate the player's movements. It always amazes me when I watch the car glide effortlessly into the van, knowing, as I do, the weeks of tweaking it took to get it just right."

Exploiting the Weapons Van is essential as failure will leave you at the mercy of *Spy Hunter*'s airborne hoodlum: the Mad Bomber helicopter. "We wanted to increase difficulty as the game went on, without simply throwing so many cars at the player that all hope was lost," says Brian. "By creating an adversary that couldn't be hurt without a particular weapon, we'd both reward them and



increase the pressure at the same time. The Mad Bomber wasn't that tough, but if you missed your chance to get the missiles, his grenades could be the final bit of mayhem that overwhelms you."

The final in-game twist comes in the form of the 'Bridge Out' notices that flash up on the highway, after which the road falters followed by a humiliating dip for any driver foolish enough to ignore the warning. The answer, as Bond fans will know, is to take a short cut through a nearby boathouse and transform from car to suitably equipped speedboat. Brian reveals that this memorable game feature was an afterthought. "Once the entire game was fully functional, we realised it would be fairly simple to re-create all the art and let our hero fight on water as well as on land," he explains. "Newly hired animator Steve Ulstad was responsible for most of the aquatic vehicles."

Brian reveals a number of other details about *Spy Hunter's* creation. The roads and rivers were not randomly generated but painstakingly mapped out in advance. A 'real-time jazz generator' played the *Peter Gunn* theme with subtle variations in every game. The timed period at the start, which allows players infinite lives was to give first-time players the chance to "make mistakes" as it was felt the game was more involved than others at the time.

We ask if Brian agrees that George Gomez's famous sit-down cabinet was the best way to experience the game. "Absolutely the best way to play it," he exclaims. "And make no mistake, George's role went way beyond 'cabinet designer'. In those early days, George was in many ways the 'unofficial' creative team lead, and his unbridled enthusiasm and passion was contagious."

Brian's also happy to provide some background on *Spy Hunter II*, a dubious follow-up that ditched the top-down formula for an angled 3D perspective. "I'd just seen the Road Warrior and was looking for a vehicle – no pun intended – that would allow me to mess with post-apocalyptic images," he recalls. "From the first design meeting, it was obvious that a lot of compromises were necessary, and I suspected we didn't have any business attempting to do what we were doing on the system we had available. But sometimes, in the real world, it has to be about keeping the guys on the production lines busy, so you work with what you've got. I don't think any of us felt that it did justice to the original."

And what a game that original was. Which makes it surprising to learn the laid-back manner in which the team pieced it together. "*Spy Hunter* was unlike almost anything in development at the time," confesses Brian. "It wasn't on a schedule, it wasn't high priority. It was developed, literally, in a back room, which helped it stay below the radar. As a result, Tom could spend months and months tuning and tweaking the game. With the benefit of hindsight, we were simply a bunch of kids being allowed to play."

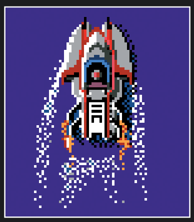
> **"George Gomez was the 'unofficial' creative team lead. His enthusiasm and passion was contagious"**

HEROES & VILLIANS

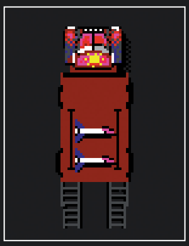
Get your motor running. Head out on the highway. Trash some spies



G-6155 INTERCEPTOR



INTERCEPTOR SPEEDBOAT



WEAPONS VAN

The bad guys, as noted in your spy-hunting handbook's appendices



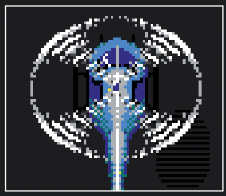
ROAD LORD (150 POINTS)



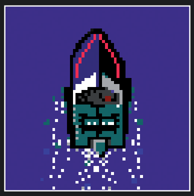
SWITCH BLADE (150 POINTS)



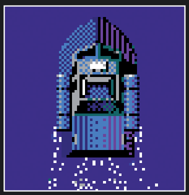
THE ENFORCER (500 POINTS)



THE MAD BOMBER (700 POINTS)



BARREL DUMPER (150 POINTS)



DOCTOR TORPEDO (500 POINTS)

Avoid the following vehicles, they're harmless civilians



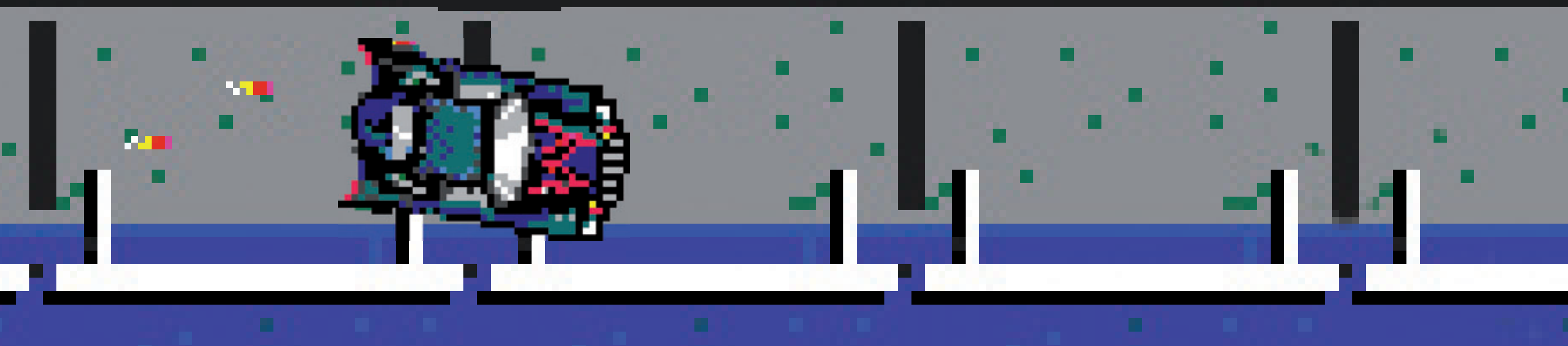
HATCHBACK



MOTORCYCLE



SALOON



Conversion Capers: Spy Hunter

BALLY MIDWAY'S HARDCORE BLASTER HAS APPEARED ON A VARIETY OF DIFFERENT SYSTEMS OVER THE YEARS, FROM THE HUMBLE ATARI 8-BITS TO A PERFECT PORT ON SONY'S PLAYSTATION. JOIN US AS WE TAKE A LOOK BACK AT SOME OF THE BEST AND WORST CONVERSIONS THE 8-BIT SYSTEMS HAD TO OFFER



ATARI 2600

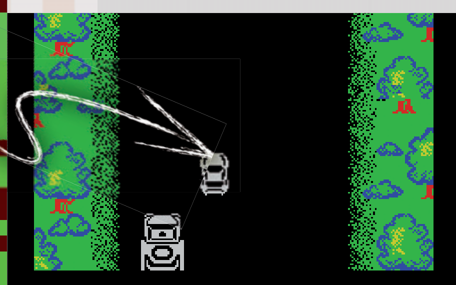
Year Released: 1984

Ignore the flickery visuals and this is a surprisingly solid little port. The thing that impresses the most with this 2600 outing is just how bloody quickly it moves, meaning it perfectly captures the breathtaking pace of the original arcade game. Collision detection is also surprisingly solid, and there's even a brave attempt to play the opening Peter Gunn theme tune. In fact, the only thing that lets *Spy Hunter* down is the need to use the second joypad in order to use all your special weapons. The back of the box may make this out to be an exciting feature, but it's actually a fiddly annoying mechanic that mars an otherwise terrific conversion.

ZX SPECTRUM

Year Released: 1985

We've very fond memories of US Gold's Spectrum conversion, and while it's not as slick as we remember, it's nevertheless an extremely impressive effort. Collision detection is nice and tight, allowing you to squeeze past enemies when the screen gets more cluttered. Your special weapons, meanwhile, are sensibly placed and easy to use. Best of all, though, are the bright cartoony graphics that accurately capture the spirit of the arcade game. In fact, if we have one little grumble about *Spy Hunter* on the Speccy, it's that it all moves along at a rather languid pace that kills a little of its excitement. That small grumble aside, it remains a cracking conversion.





AMSTRAD CPC

Year Released: 1985

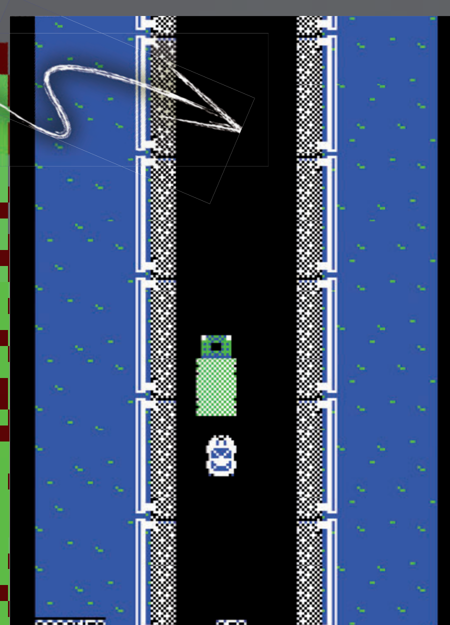
It certainly looks bright and colourful, but the poor old Amstrad just can't cope with Bally Midway's arcade game. As well as being even more sluggish than the Spectrum outing, it's also far more sensitive to control, with your car often sliding across roads as if it's on ice. Other annoyances include the slow pace at which you fire your guns and the fact that traffic rarely seems to bother you – you'll often be on screen with just the trees for company. Effectively, all the excitement and adrenaline from the arcade original has been lost in the transition and the end result is an extremely dull, pedestrian port.



COMMODORE 64 **(BEST VERSION)**

Year Released: 1985

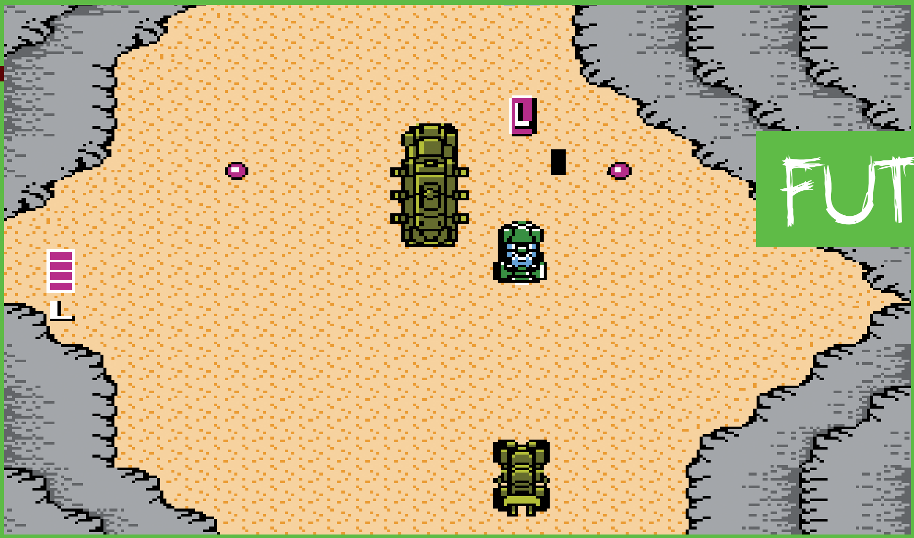
Commodore 64 owners can sit smug in knowledge that their home conversion is easily the best of the home computers. The roads are constantly busy, and a fairly authentic replication of Henry Mancini's theme tune plays away in the background. The controls, meanwhile, are wonderfully responsive. It also moves along at a cracking pace, effortlessly capturing the speed and urgency of the arcade original. Polished visuals round off a truly impressive conversion that delivers fun by the bucketload and still plays well now. Okay, so it has a rather crippling bug that allows you to avoid enemies by sticking in the verge, but where's the fun in using that?



BBC MICRO (WORST VERSION)

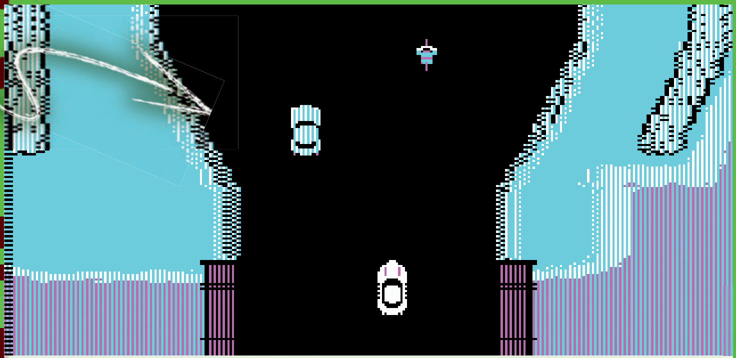
Year Released: 1985

Now this is a disappointment. *Spy Hunter* on the BBC looks very impressive. Visually, everything looks great (despite the limited colour palette) and it shifts along at an impressive speed that requires quick reflexes in order to stay on the winding road. Fortunately, this isn't a problem as controls are tight and responsive. So why are we so disappointed? Simple really, coder David Hoskins forgot to put enemies in. All right, so they're in there, but they come along so infrequently you simply end up driving down long boring stretches of road. A pity as it otherwise shows great potential.



FUTURE SPY HUNTER

It was common for the NES to have its own unique conversions and spin-offs of classic arcade games (*Bionic Commando, Strider, Rygar* to name a few), so it should come as little surprise that the console also has its own isolated *Spy Hunter* sequel. *Super Spy Hunter* (1987) was a futuristic follow up that played out like a mix of the original top-down classic and Capcom's *L.E.D Storm*. Adding bosses, a health bar, curving tracks, overblown power ups and even a bonnet-mounted gun that fired 360 degrees and could be fired up the screen (à la The Force in *R-Type*), *Super Spy Hunter* is actually quite an enjoyable top-down race/shooter, and marginally better than the NES conversion of the original coin-op. If you're a fan of *Spy Hunter*, we recommend you check it out.



PC

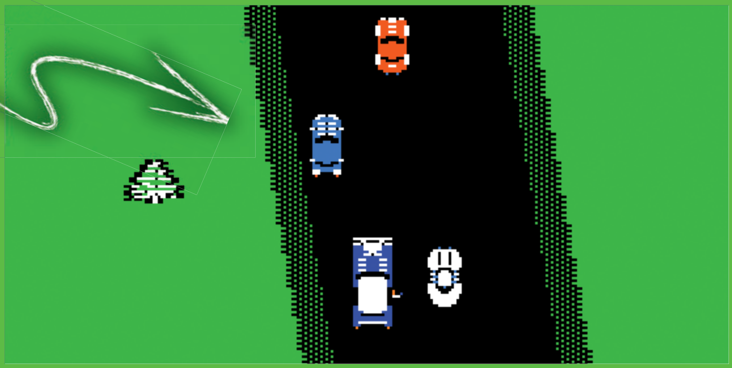
Year Released: 1984

This is a pretty pedestrian port of the original coin-op that doesn't excel in any department. In terms of sound, this version is up there with the worst. The sound effects in the game are nothing more than various fart sounds and fuzzy beeping noises. Also, the game's CGA supported graphics mean playing the game through a composite monitor makes the visuals go all blurry – it's far better played through RGB-o-vision (à la Lilac World, as pictured here). The gameplay feels reasonably smooth though, and that the game came as a PC booter also gives it a few extra brownie points.

APPLE II

Year Released: 1983

In terms of looks, we'd say the Apple II version is a success. The cars are nicely detailed, and the G-6155 Interceptor keeps the coin-op's nice white, red and blue livery. But sadly that's all this port has going for it. The cool Peter Gunn theme tune is nowhere to be heard, instead we get eardrum-piercing beeps and plinks for sound effects, and the gameplay stutters along, lacking the fluidity of the C64 and Colecovision conversions. To make matters worse, the roads in the game hardly snake at all, and there are no water sections, which makes the whole *Spy Hunter* experience akin to driving on a boring stretch of motorway full of joyriding 11-year-olds while listening to a bleep test.





ATARI 800

Year Released: 1984

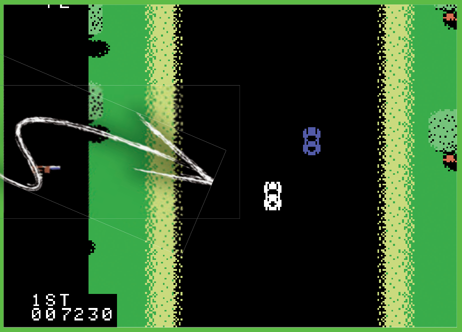
That the A800 version is almost identical to the excellent C64 game means it's no surprise it offers another sterling port of the arcade game. While the roads in the game feel quieter and the graphics notably darker, this version matches the Commodore port in almost every other department – the controls feel solid, the game feels fluid, the theme tune is still catchy and the gameplay is incredibly addictive. The lack of heavy congestion on the roads also makes this port a little easier than most, but that's kind of its charm. The game is also available on both cartridge and disk format for the machine, which is actually quite a pointless bit of trivia.



NES

Year Released: 1987

The NES version was published by SunSoft, and while the game is wonderfully presented and recreates the look of the arcade game on the console, the controls and action are incredibly frantic – perhaps more so than any other conversion. Couple this with plenty of cars on screen – the game even throws up three power-up trucks at once – and your car feeling like it's made of milk and eggshells and you have one incredibly challenging game. Though if you consider yourself a *Spy Hunter* savant and pretty graphics is your thing, this is the port for you.



COLECOVISION

Year Released: 1984

We're almost getting bored of saying it, but once again here is another brilliant conversion of *Spy Hunter*, one that just pips the Atari versions we reckon, but only just. The graphics are excellent, the iconic Mancini theme tune sounds crisp and the action and speed is pitch perfect. On top of all that the power ups and score tally sit conveniently at the left of the screen, rather than at the top and base, so that the entire screen is taken up by road to give you a far better view of what's coming up ahead. The game also plays brilliantly with the console's Super Action Controller, which makes selecting your chosen power up a real doddle.

BOSS/RUSH

WHERE WE SQUARE OFF AGAINST THAT END-OF-LEVEL BADDIE FROM YESTERYEAR...

DURAL



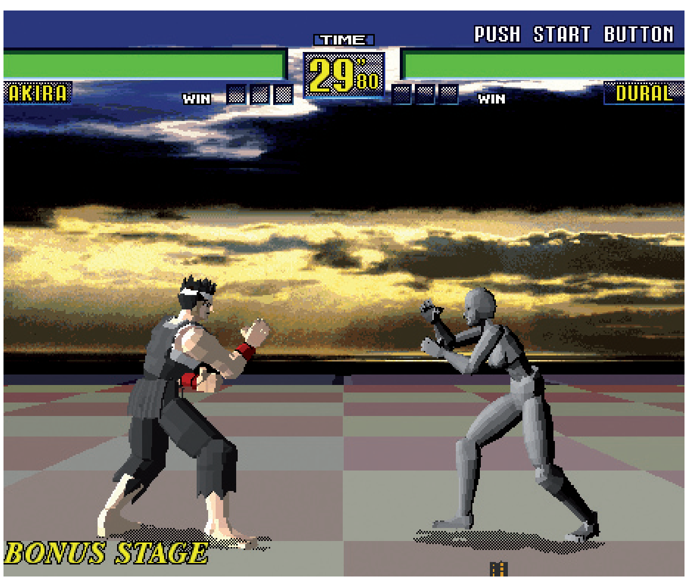
GAME INFO



- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- » **RELEASED:** 1993
- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** SEGA-AM2



» [Arcade] Akira defeats Dural, and we're reminded how far 3D graphics have come in a relatively short period.



» [Arcade] Dural's first appearance was in *Virtua Fighter*, and, to be fair, back then she wasn't much to look at.

Despite having very little in the way of personality, Dural has remained a popular character in the *Virtua Fighter* series. After the player has been dazzled by the polygonal 3D fighters and the speed and fluidity with which the gameplay ebbs and flows, finally defeating the game's roster of fighters, Sega reveals one more surprise from up its sleeve.

With no fanfare to signal her entrance to the game or cut-scene to explain who, or rather what, she is, Dural – said to be named after the command input required to unlock her in the game: down, up, right, A + left – is a brilliant beat-'em-up curio that has remained a solid and integral glue that binds together the games and fighters of Sega's *Virtua Fighter* franchise.

Looking like a cross between a half-finished character model and a female version of the T-1000, Dural's dour grey colour – although she would later be seen in various colours and versions, including gold, black and transparent – and the clanging sound effects that accompanied your punches and kicks signal to you that she is made of metal. Yet despite her burnished frame she surprises by being both nimble and agile, and able to mimic other characters' fighting styles, making her the perfect fighting machine.

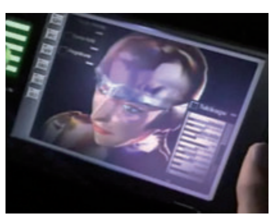
But Dural also gave the *Virtua Fighter* series its underpinning story arc when it's revealed that her past is entwined with that of the popular ninja character Kage-Maru. Dural is all that remains of Kage's mother, Tsukikage, who we learn was kidnapped and brainwashed by a mysterious organisation called J6. Under the enslavement of J6, Tsukikage received cybernetic implants – not those kind of implants – to her body and was eventually transformed into the character that we now know as Dural.

Over the course of the franchise, Sega has given fans little insight into the mysterious background of J6 and its Dural program. Only through the investigative efforts of Kage, which are detailed over the course of the series, have fans been able to eke further insight into J6 and its motives.

It's in *Virtua Fighter 3* that Kage finally rescues his mother and nurses her back to health. Sadly, though, their reunion was to be short-lived when she was struck down by a mysterious illness, thought to be the side effects of the Dural program. After battling through the fourth tournament in a bid to seek a cure for his mother, Kage eventually recovers a part from the new Dural model, which the player faces at the end of the game. Hoping the part can be used to save his mother, the plan cruelly backfires when it causes her to revert to her Dural state, in which she escapes and returns to J6. With two test subjects proving unsuccessful, J6 turned its attention to a new fighter, Vanessa Lewis, for use in the next Dural project. Vanessa is rescued before any permanent damage is done, but not before the scientists at J6 extracted her fight data for use in their current and final Dural model: V-Dural.

As well as helping to tie many of the plotlines together, Dural helps to highlight the characters of *Virtua Fighter*. In a series that has a keen eye for realism, Dural adds a breath of fresh air, adding a sense of science fiction and intrigue to the game's otherwise non-existent back story and serious gameplay.

"DURAL IS A BREATH OF FRESH AIR TO ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST SERIOUS FRANCHISES, ADDING A SENSE OF INTRIGUE TO THE GAME'S BACK STORY AND GAMEPLAY"



» [Dreamcast] A rare glimpse of Kage-Maru's mother, taken from a *Virtua Fighter 3tb* cut-scene.



» [PS3] Although she's not always the same model, Dural's look has changed over the series. She's much taller these days.



» [Dreamcast] *Virtua Fighter 3tb* is the first time that Dural would appear on the box art, showing her popularity.

CLASSIC GAMING ON A BUDGET

CHEAP AS CHIPS



If there's one thing we've learned about retro gaming it's that your money can stretch an amazingly long way if you want it to. Granted, a mint copy of *Radiant Silvergun* is going to cost you a small fortune, but there are plenty of other worthy titles that can be picked up for less than a fiver…

THE TERMINATOR

- » **SYSTEM:** MEGA DRIVE
- » **RELEASED:** 1991
- » **PUBLISHER:** VIRGIN ENTERTAINMENT
- » **DEVELOPER:** PROBE



» [Mega Drive] The presentation throughout the game is impressive. Back in 1991 this FMV still was better than reality.

Traditionally, videogames that are based on films share the same level of entertainment as watching fleas sleep, but there are good apples out there, of course, if you can be bothered to climb a few wasp-infested trees. One of our favourite films as a kid was *The Terminator*, so being a bit of a fan of the film, imagine our joy when we finally got a copy of the game for Sega's Mega Drive.

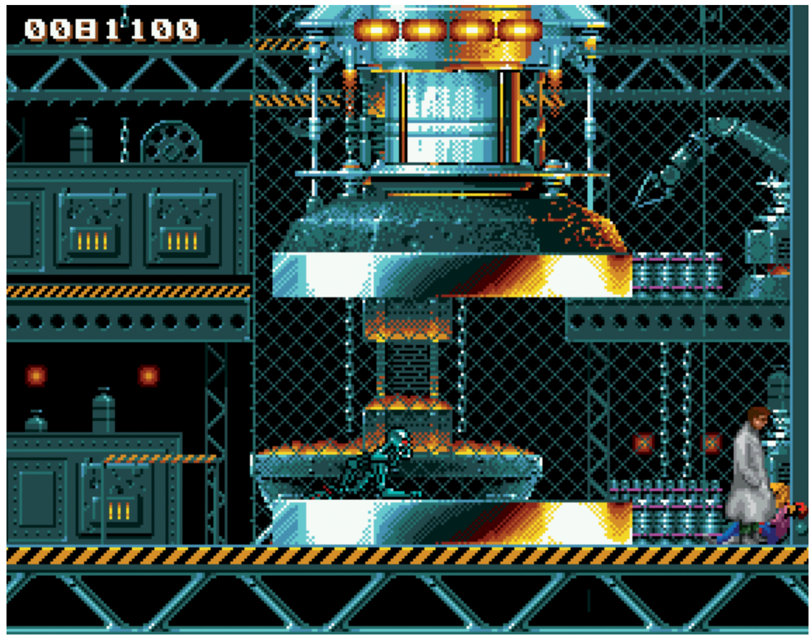
Now, despite it being a bit of a weird game with clearly a few issues, which we won't try to defend, as it goes for next to nothing these days we feel the good outweighs the not so good and see no reason you shouldn't consider adding it to your Mega Drive collection.

As well as being one of the shortest videogames in the world, the difficulty level in the game seems to play out in reverse to that of traditional games, with each subsequent level feeling noticeably shorter and easier to finish than the last. Because of this, the first level has been known to put off most people from ever finishing the game, especially when they come up against that giant robot tank that takes like a billion grenades to kill – which is the first bloody enemy you face in the game, for Christ's sake! Such a bizarre first enemy will probably have you thinking that either the game has broken, or Dave Perry, who programmed the game, was obviously aiming for uber-realism. Anyway, after a quick fight above ground you, playing Kyle Reese, venture into an underground Skynet laboratory where you face an infinite number of T-800s, blow up a few doors and a generator, and escape through time to the past to save Sarah Connor.

Now we've heard many people moan about the fact that *The Terminator* only gives you one life to finish it with, and while you might think that a little unfair, as the game has just four stages and can be finished in about 15 minutes on the easiest difficulty setting, you can understand why that was. As we said, it's a weird game, so why the hell are we recommending it? Well, it's because it actually does a pretty great job of recreating the memorable, but few, action set pieces in the film, and for all its flaws remains one of the best *Terminator* games ever made.

Furthermore, it's also an enjoyable and wonderfully presented run and gun title with great graphics – it's one of the earliest videogames to use a very archaic method of motion capture, which Perry devised in his back garden – and sound and an intro, ripped straight from the film, that really sets up things perfectly. Okay, so it's a little on the short side, but then we've always been firm believers in quality over quantity, especially at the negligible cost of a few quid. And besides, we'd rather play four levels of a great movie tie-in than wade through 100 levels of some trashy pap like *Last Action Hero* or *Cliffhanger*.

So if *Terminator Salvation* has been an essential part of your summer blockbuster intake, why not forgo the popcorn and just pump the money into picking up this game instead? Well, it's just a thought…

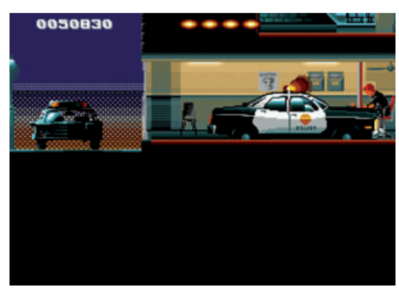


» [Mega Drive] Look, we know it's juvenile, but we just couldn't resist putting this image in the mag.





» [Mega Drive] Unusually for a Dave Perry game, there are no hidden mini-games, despite great opportunities to add some.



» [Mega Drive] The credit crunch forced the local police department to use their cars as desks.

It's a jungle out there. Swing through it



iPad

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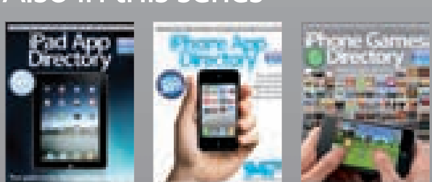
Kindle

Directory™

★★★★★

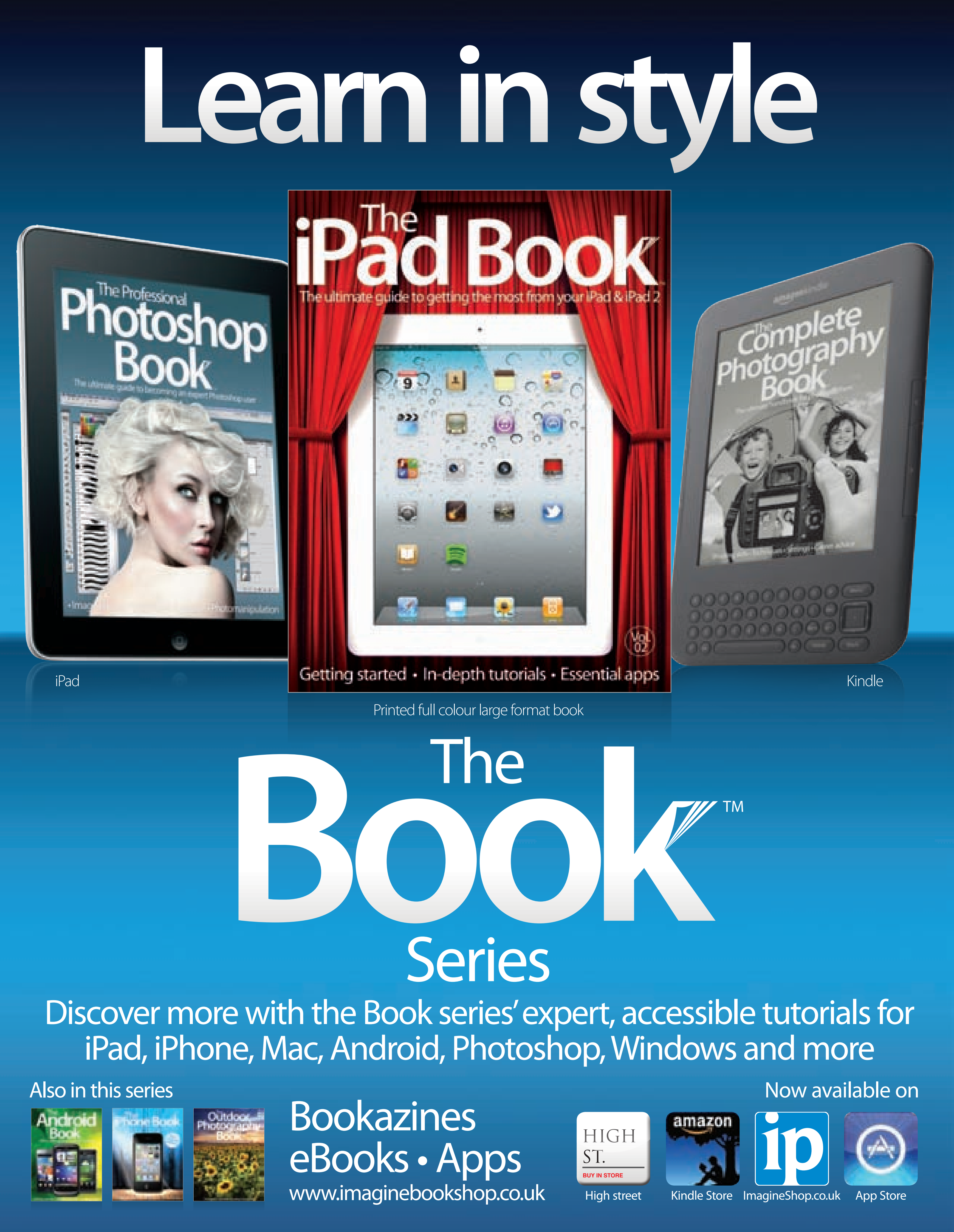
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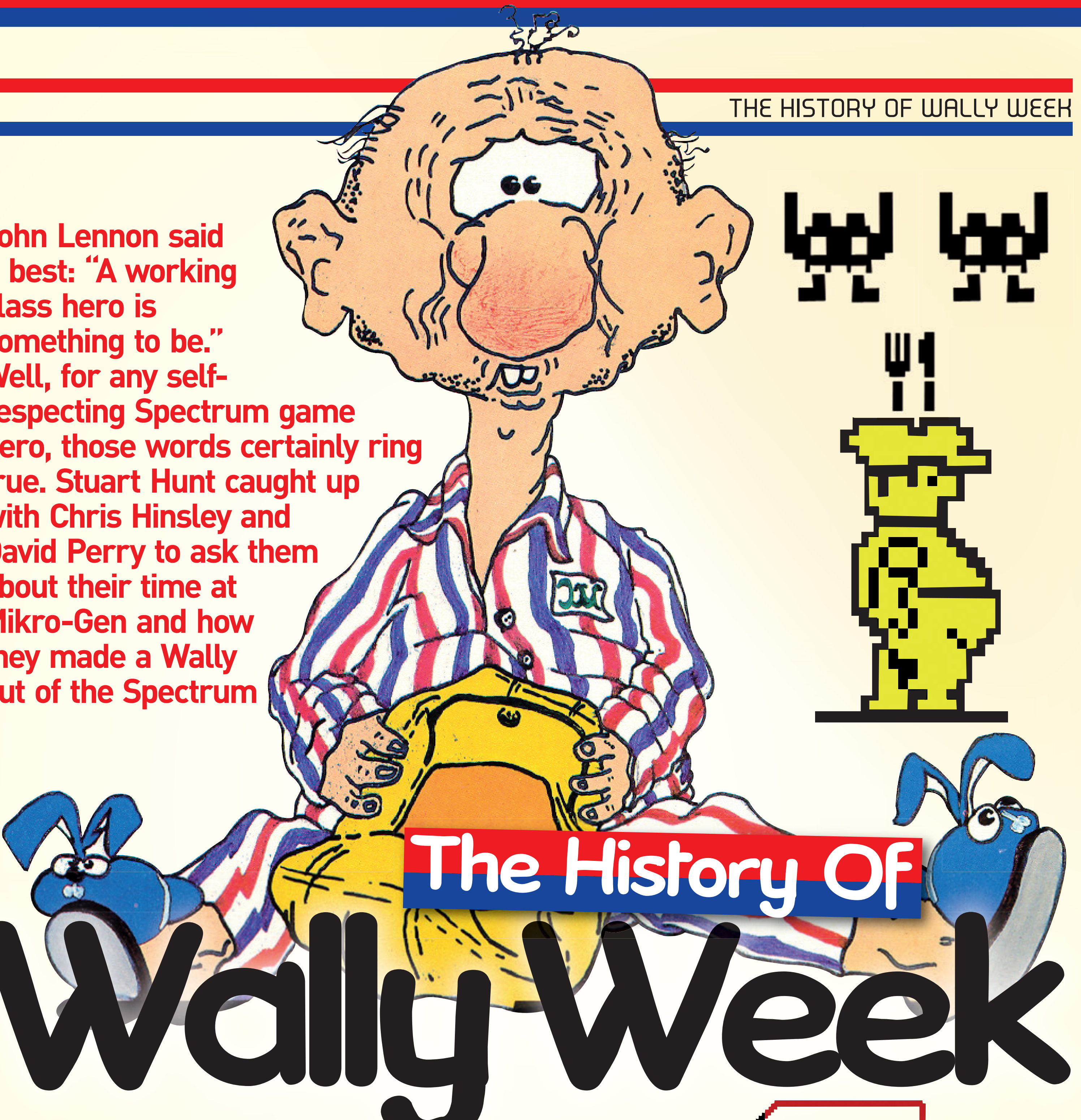
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John Lennon said it best: "A working class hero is something to be." Well, for any self-respecting Spectrum game hero, those words certainly ring true. Stuart Hunt caught up with Chris Hinsley and David Perry to ask them about their time at Mikro-Gen and how they made a Wally out of the Spectrum

The History Of Wally Week

Chris Hinsley joined Mikro-Gen at the age of 18. The job offer was the culmination of a chance meeting with Mikro-Gen sales manager Paul Denial six years earlier. Chris struggles to remember how it came about, but he does remember that he'd met with Paul to show him six games that he'd written on his ZX81 and Spectrum ZX. Then a fledgling company desperate for new content, Mikro-Gen took the games on and paid Chris a small sum for his efforts.

When the company would finally ask Chris to work for it, he was in his first year of university and feeling a little disenchanted by the plodding pace of his programming course. And so, after some persuasion from his friends, he duly accepted Mikro-Gen's job offer, quit his university course, and moved to the company's base in Ashford, Middlesex.

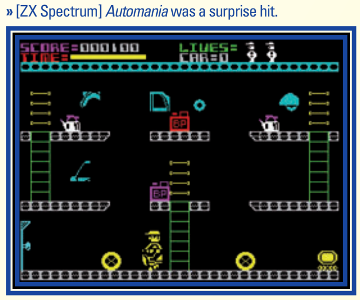
At the time of Chris joining, Mikro-Gen consisted of just three people: Mike Meek (managing director), Paul Denial (sales manager) and Andy Lawrie (technical director). After settling into his new role as programmer, Chris set about getting to grips with the new development tools and applications, converting all of the code for one of his earlier games, *Laserwarp*, into assembly and using it to make his first game under Mikro-Gen. Chris reveals how he came up with the concept for that game, *Automania*:

"At the time, I remember thinking up a game scenario where you could collect and build, and that's when I stuck on the idea for collecting parts to build cars, and that's really where the whole mechanic theme in *Automania* came from. Looking back, there were no great shakes as far as the game went. It was a simple two-screen game where you collected car parts in one screen and assembled them in another. It was actually very limited."

Automania detailed the endeavours of bumbling mechanic Wally Week, who was tasked with assembling various automobile parts in order

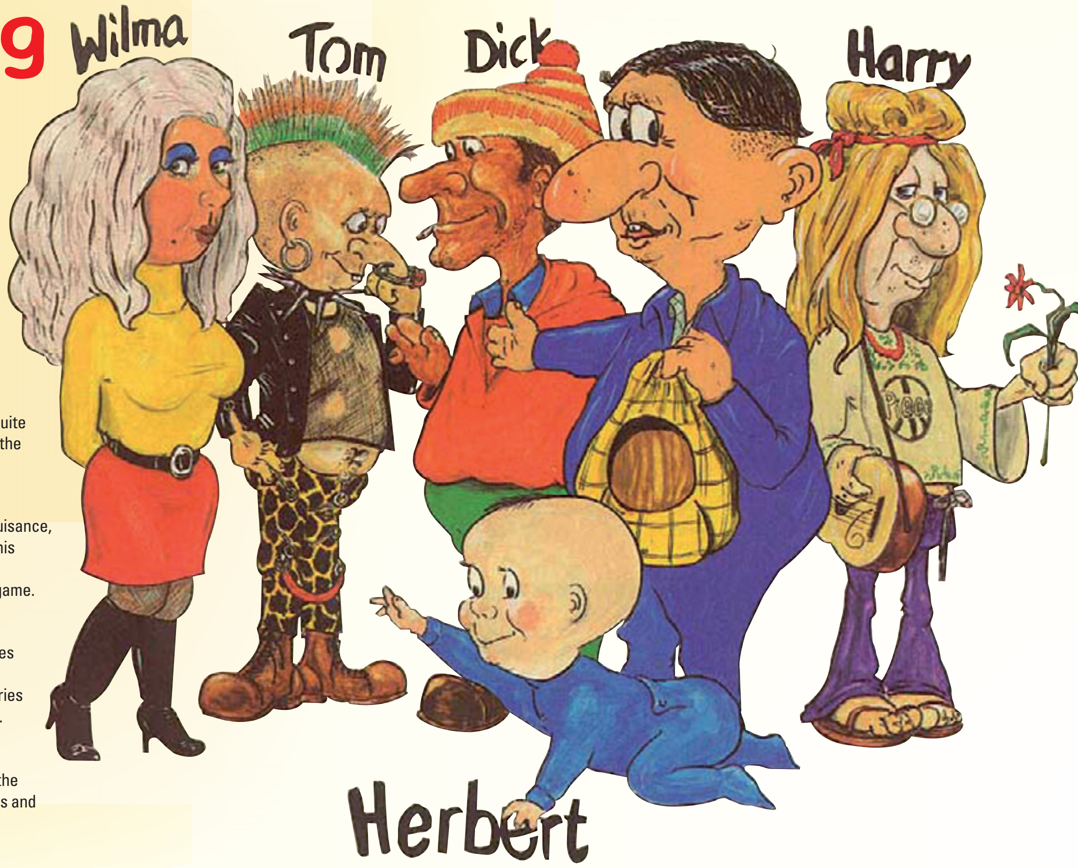


» [ZX Spectrum] *Automania* was a surprise hit.



Meet the gang

What started as a throwaway character soon developed into a full-blown family…



WILMA
Wilma, who looks like Pauline Calf, is Wally's doting wife. She wears tight leather pants, has puffy hair, held up by a gallon of hairspray, and is said to be a real shopaholic. Yes, she may be high maintenance, but if Wally insists on having a trophy wife then he's his own worst enemy.

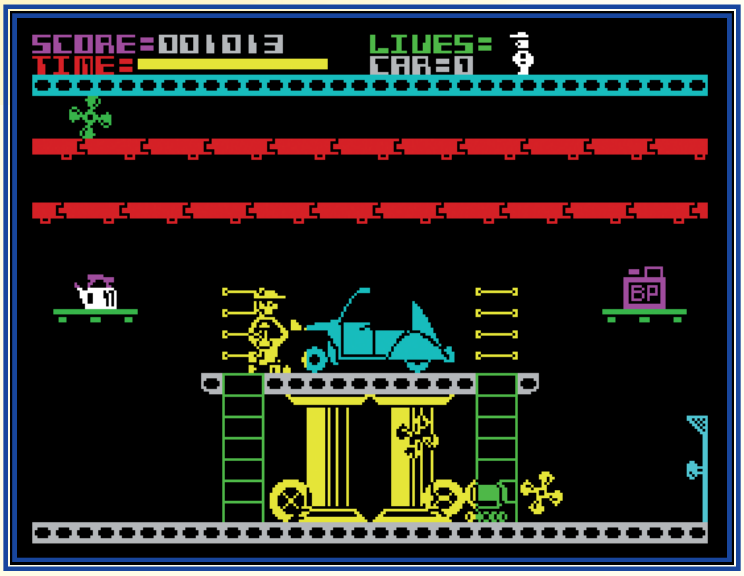
TOM
Tom is a green-haired punk rocker and good friend of Wally. Like Wally, Tom is a mechanic, whose skills come into play in *EAW* when he is tasked with removing the flat battery from the forklift truck in the game.

DICK
Dick is a tea cosy-wearing plumber by trade whose skills come into play quite early in the game. Using the monkey wrench and plunger, it's his job to fix the dodgy fountain at the start of the game.

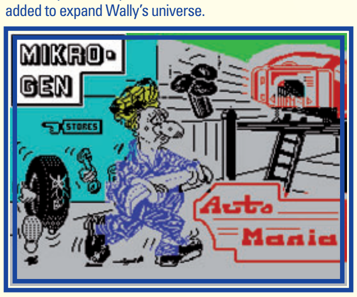
HERBERT
Despite his young age, Herbert is a bit of a tiny tearaway. In *EAW* he's a nuisance, crawling along the floor and just getting in everyone's way – although, in his defence, Wally and Wilma's parenting methods leave much to be desired. Herbert's also the only member of the *Wally* gang to get his own spin-off game.

WALLY
With a flat cap, oversized nose, and a fully loaded beer engine, Wally shares more than a slight similarity to Reg Smythe's Andy Capp – who, Chris revealed to us, was actually a big inspiration behind the character. The series tell us that Wally is a mechanic turned builder and is a pretty deep sleeper.

HARRY
While he may give the impression that urgency is something he snores in the face of, Harry the hippie is something of an expert in the field of electronics and is used to help recharge the flat battery from the forklift.



» [ZX Spectrum] *Automania* was popular enough for Mikro-Gen to try to develop it into a series, with new characters added to expand Wally's universe.



to build a fleet of ten cars, starting with a Citroen 2CV and ending with a swanky new Rolls Royce. Trying to stop Wally's relatively straightforward plight, though, were possessed parts, environmental hazards and a stringent timer ticking down at the top of the screen. While Chris, by his own admission, admits that *Automania* was a simple game, it was most certainly not without merit. For its time, *Automania* featured wonderful big and detailed-looking graphics, and the whole 'assembling' idea, while very similar to Ultimate's *Jetpac*, certainly added another twist to the usual jump-and-collect formula that was so piquant at the time. All the same, it went out there and proved to be a popular seller for Mikro-Gen, allowing Chris to begin work on a sequel.

"When we did *Automania* there was no plan to have a character that ran and ran. We just wanted a character similar to *Manic Miner* to feature in our game. We reused the same character for *Pyjamarama* partly due to laziness and partly due to the fact that we wanted to test whether or not we could get a successful character going. It was really down to *Pyjamarama* being such a huge hit that we then decided to do a series of *Wally* games."

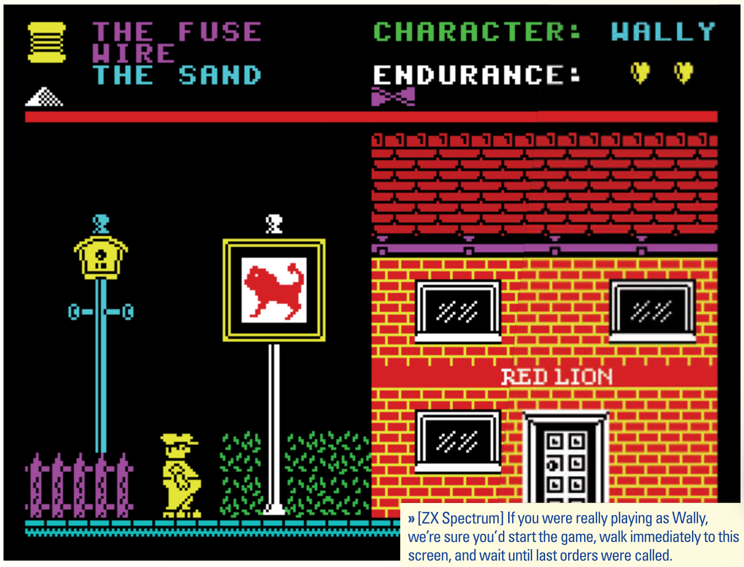
When asked about who actually came up with the character of Wally Week, Chris reveals that the idea can be credited to Paul Denial, Mikro-Gen's sales manager, who had broached the idea of having a typical northern flat-cap stereotype character, similar in look to Reg Smythe's Andy Capp, appear in a game. And after taking a rough sketch of Wally that Paul had scribbled on a piece of graph paper, Chris redrew the image into a sprite editor and Wally Week took shape.

Pyjamarama was really the turning point for Mikro-Gen and the *Wally Week* series. It was a huge commercial success and a game that established the character of Wally Week as a permanent fixture at Mikro-Gen. It also refined the gameplay style of the series, setting a precedent that all the subsequent *Wally Week* games would adopt.

"*Pyjamarama* was a real eye-opener in terms of what you could do in an arcade game because it had this adventure element to it," reveals Chris. "I had the responsibility for the entire game: programming, graphics, sound… You name it, I did it. And even though Andy could program, he wasn't an arcade games kind of guy; more your database tables and indexing records type of guy. What was a group activity was storyboarding, which was when we all sat around discussing ideas for the puzzles and objects that Wally had to solve and use."

At the time of *Pyjamarama*'s inception there was healthy competition between the top software houses, which all raced to be the first to add new features into their games.

"At the time, the nearest anyone had come to an 'arcade adventure'



» [ZX Spectrum] If you were really playing as Wally, we're sure you'd start the game, walk immediately to this screen, and wait until last orders were called.

And the award goes to… uh

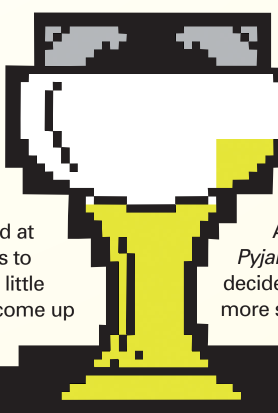
Owing to its envelope-pushing and genre-mashing, *Pyjamarama* earned Chris a lovely Golden Joystick award. But, for reasons that we'll just let him explain, he wasn't able to collect his award at the time: "I remember being stuck throwing up in the toilets during the awards ceremony in London and Dave Perry stepped in to collect the award for me. I never was into the fame and celebrity stuff, but for Dave it was the start of a career in self-publishing and image management." [Laughs]

"We reused the same character due to laziness and to see if we could get a character going"

was in Ultimate games, but you still just ran around collecting objects – nothing too complex. So I had the idea that *Pyjamarama* should be the first true 'arcade adventure', where you used objects to solve puzzles in order to progress. It was unique at the time, and all the reviews knew it too. A true genre-defining moment."

As well as being a unique gameplay experience, *Pyjamarama* stood out for its wonderfully big, bold and colourful visuals, which circumvented a lot of colour issues that were part and parcel of Spectrum games of the time. It also turns out the game's imaginative dream scenario was specifically selected with this problem in mind.

"Well, the *Pyjamarama* scenario came about because you could only have two colours in an 8x8-pixel square on a Spectrum. If you wanted to have small graphics that were in scale to the character then everything would have to end up being in monochrome. If you look at other games that were around at the time everything was to scale, but it all looked a little blocky. We decided to come up with a scenario that would let us draw really big objects that we could then fill with colour and decided that if the adventure is one where the main character is asleep, and the game is a dream, then everything in its world can be completely outlandish. That scenario meant we got away with having large objects in the game and nobody would ever question it."



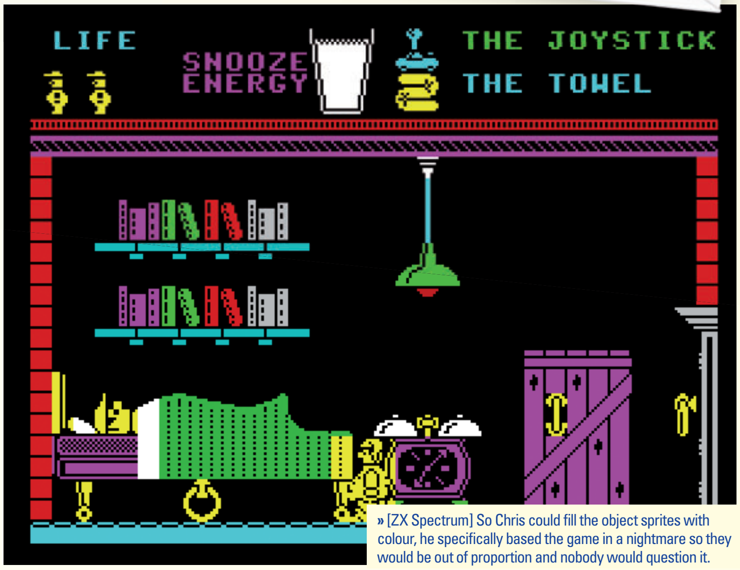
The dovetailing of adventure elements with an arcade game had never really happened before the release of *Pyjamarama*. Consequently, magazines of the time were quick to rave about the game, with many hailing it as a 'genre-defining' game. *Pyjamarama* also earned Chris a coveted Golden Joystick award, which through complete fault of his own (see 'And the award goes to… uh') he never actually got to accept in person. Reaching number one in the game charts, *Pyjamarama* rapidly turned Mikro-Gen's fortunes around and became the impetus behind the decision to expand the *Wally Week* universe.

After the release of *Pyjamarama*, Mikro-Gen decided it would need to hire more staff. In the time that followed, it employed Nick Jones (*Frost Byte*, *Equinox*), Raffaele Cecco (*Exolon*, *Cybernoid*) and Shiny Entertainment founder and *Earthworm Jim* creator David Perry, who worked alongside Chris on the *Wally Week* series.

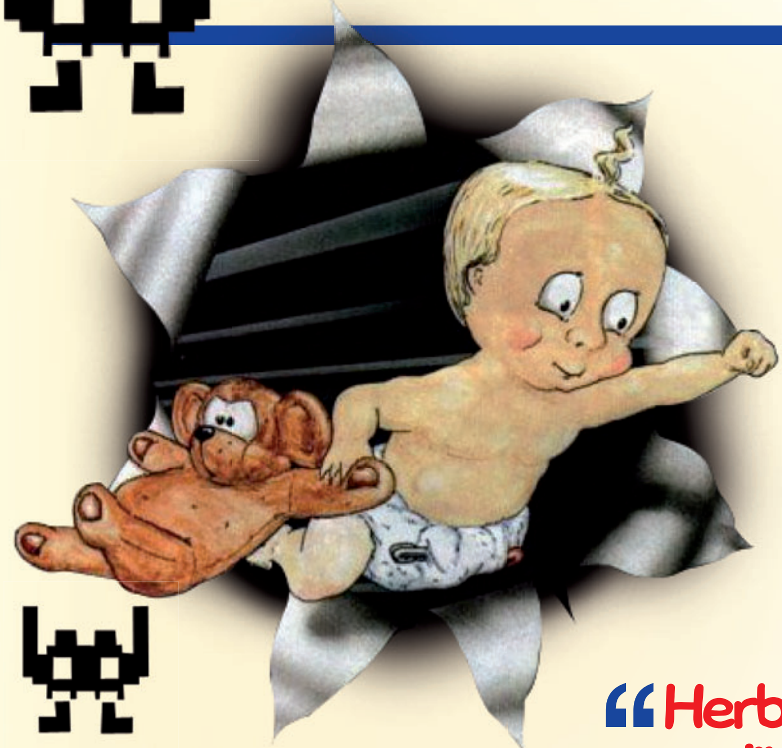
"When I first met David he was fresh out of college in Belfast, and you couldn't understand a word he was saying. [Laughs] He just had this really broad Northern Ireland accent, but we just got on like a house on fire and got up to plenty of hell raising in the office. I remember we used to have eating contests; Fat Frog lollies or saveloy sausages, I recall. Dave and I used to compete against each other, and I remember being sick as a pig after one lengthy sausage-eating session. But day to day we sat next to each other along this long workbench that stretched all the way along the office wall."



David came to Mikro-Gen's attention after sending them one of his early BASIC games, *Drakmaze*, to look at. Impressed by his work, Mikro-Gen asked David whether he would be willing to up sticks from his parents' home in Northern Ireland and work for them in London. David accepted the job and began work writing an assembly-language platformer called *Potholing Pete*, which was later aborted. The generally confident David Perry is



» [ZX Spectrum] So Chris could fill the object sprites with colour, he specifically based the game in a nightmare so they would be out of proportion and nobody would question it.



» [ZX Spectrum] *Herbert's Dummy Run* features a version of *Space Invaders*, and, like the version in *Pyjamarama*, successfully finishing it awards you an extra life.



» [ZX Spectrum] *Herbert's Dummy Run* was titled as a joke at the expense of the inexperienced Dave Perry.



» [ZX Spectrum] *Herbert's Dummy Run* was set amid the dangers of a department store.

very honest about his skills as a programmer when he first joined, even admitting to us that he felt "outclassed" when he first joined Mikro-Gen. He's also quick to champion Chris's mentorship and guidance, when after feeling the disappointment of having his first game for Mikro-Gen dropped Chris took David under his wing and they began working together on the *Wally Week* series.

"I knew BASIC and Z80 both really well when I arrived at Mikro-Gen, so I was pretty shocked to find out that it wasn't really enough to cut the mustard. On slower processors, it's really all about tricks and engine architecture, so just 'programming' isn't really enough. That turned out to be the real challenge to learn and start generating tricks to get things done. Chris certainly was several steps ahead of me, and so I was asked to put *Pyjamarama* on the Amstrad CPC. This turned out to be my enlightenment period, when I saw how 'real' code worked," remembers David. The next game in the *Wally Week* series was *Everyone's A Wally*. It was another arcade adventure game, in the style of *Pyjamarama*, and another title that pushed a few envelopes too. Chris tells us that he was always aiming to make each new *Wally* game bigger and better than the last, and to also give fans something that they hadn't seen before.

"In *Everyone's A Wally* we thought, 'Well, we've got the adventure side of things in the game', so the next thing to do was to introduce multiple characters, each with independent adventures to solve and to have those adventures solve a collective goal. Again, it was another unique thing that hadn't been done before in a game. It was at that point we decided we would need a whole bunch of characters, as well as Wally, and started thinking that Wally's family could get involved. We then added Wilma (Wally's wife) and his three mates, Tom, Dick and Harry – well what else were they going to be called? – and Herbert, Wally's son, who was introduced purely as a little

> "Herbert was introduced purely as a little sprite you had to avoid"

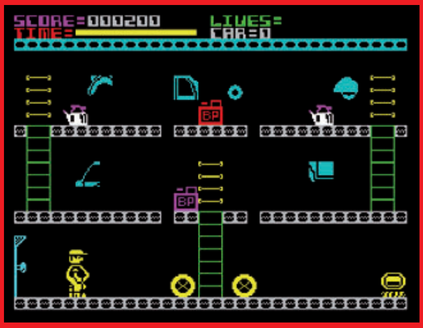


A week in the life

From car repair to angry natives...

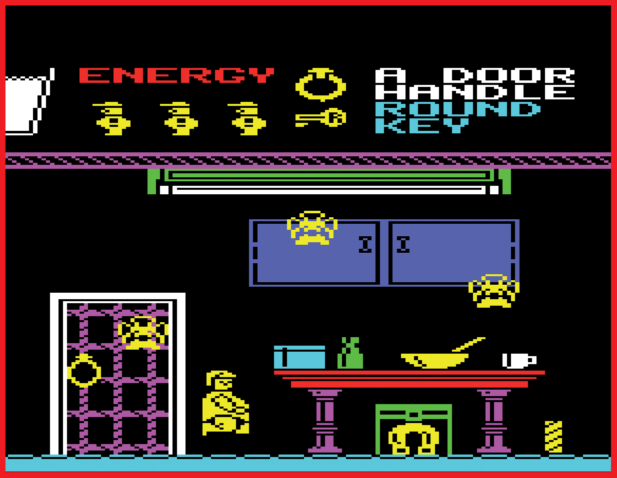
AUTOMANIA

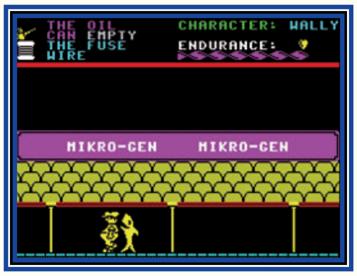
Hardworking mechanic Wally Week is on a mission to build ten cars, starting with a Citroen 2CV and ending with a Rolls Royce. Wally must collect the various parts from one screen and assemble them in another, and he must do so in the correct order. But Wally must be careful to avoid the deadly objects that are trying to stop him from completing his mission.



PYJAMARAMA

Help Wally keep his job; that's the mission at hand. After a heavy night down the pub, Wally finds himself in a heavy night's sleep and forgetting to set his alarm clock. On his final warning at work for tardiness, you must help Wally's pint-sized subconscious alter ego find the key to wind up his alarm clock to ensure Wally still has a job when we wakes up in the morning.





» [ZX Spectrum] A *Daley Thompson*-style mini-game awaits Wally should he fall into the sewer underneath the level.



» [ZX Spectrum] Herbert enjoying himself in a game of *Breakout* while his parents are worrying themselves sick.



» [CPC] *EAW* introduced five more characters in the game, and only Herbert the baby cannot be controlled. Avoid him at all costs.

sprite you had to avoid and wasn't a controllable character."

After porting *Pyjamarama* across to the Amstrad, David's first opportunity to get stuck in to his own *Wally* game came after he was asked to take Chris's *Pyjamarama* code and use it to create a new game that fleshed out the character of Wally's infant son, Herbert. We asked Chris why it was that Herbert was selected to get his own spin-off *Wally* game and not any of the other characters who appeared in *Everyone's A Wally*.

"Well, it would have been tricky to go back to having Wally just on his own in another game. That would have been a bit of a step backwards. Also, we did want to have something simple, as it was pretty much Dave's baptism of fire. He needed a project that wasn't too hairy to do, featuring a simple character using a re-spinning of the *Pyjamarama* code. As we didn't do a lot with Herbert in *Everyone's A Wally*, we all thought, 'Why don't we do a game about the character?' As soon as doing a Herbert game was mentioned we all thought a good name for it would be *Dummy Run*, as it was Dave's dummy run. It was partly as a piss-take at Dave."

Herbert's Dummy Run was another popular game in the *Wally* series, providing a perfect proving ground for David before Mikro-Gen would let him loose on his own *Wally Week* game. *HDR*'s premise found Herbert lost inside a large shopping mall teeming with deadly merchandise. Like *Pyjamarama* and *EAW*, Herbert had to solve object-based puzzles to find the lost and found department where his parents, Wally and Wilma, are waiting anxiously for him.

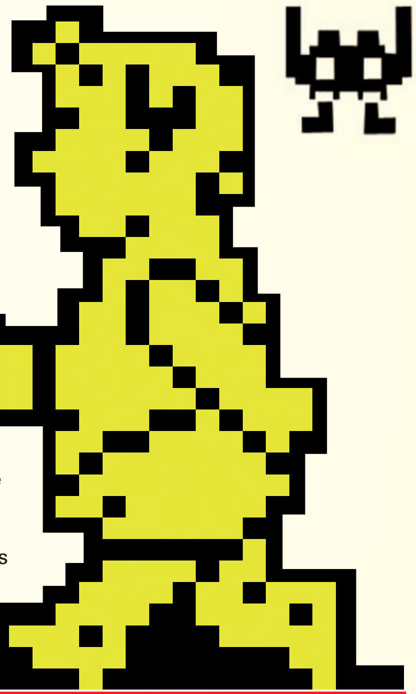
A clear theme that runs through all of the *Wally* games, following the release of *Automania*, was the satirising of other games within the *Wally* world. This was introduced in *Pyjamarama* where, when the player enters the room marked 'videogame room', they are met with a mystery arcade game of *Space Invaders*. We asked Chris about this brilliant little *Wally* motif:

"We tried to have this recurring theme from *Pyjamarama* onwards where there would be some mystery game in there, and if you were running low on lives you could play the hidden arcade games in order to get more. In *EAW* if you went into the phone booths you found yourself playing a game of *Asteroids*, and the idea was you could clear a sheet of *Asteroids* to earn an extra life, but also if you went from one side of the screen to the other you would come out at the other phone booth at the other side of the map. We also included a *Daley Thompson's Decathlon*-style game in the sewer, where a shark would chase Wally and you continually push left to right on the controls to pick up speed and escape."

And, David adds when we quiz him a little about the homage to both *Bomber* and *Breakout* in *Herbert's Dummy Run*:

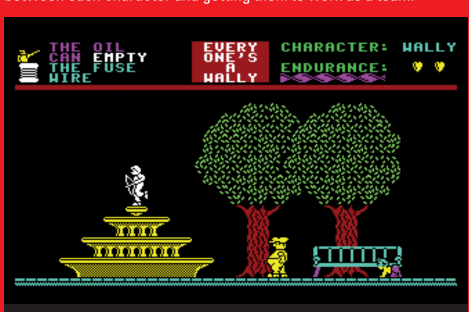
"Well, those were two of my favourites at the time, so I just coded them. If you look to *Earthworm Jim*, it's something we continued – like when you are saving puppies, that was included because I liked the old Nintendo Game & Watch game *Fire*, so you see that quite a bit over the years. The things that shaped us getting love."

Despite proving another success for Mikro-Gen,



EVERYONE'S A WALLY

Originally titled *Life Of Wally*, *EAW* found our hero – with a little help from his family and friends – trying to crack the combination for the safe to pay the gang's wages. Each character has a specific trait that is essential for solving certain puzzles. Success relies on flitting between each character and getting them to work as a team.



HERBERT'S DUMMY RUN

During a shopping trip, Wally and Wilma lose Herbert after the toddler wanders off and gets lost in the store. It's up to you to help Herbert waddle his way through the perilous departments and reunite him with his folks, who are anxiously waiting for him.



THREE WEEKS IN PARADISE

When Wally treats Wilma and Herbert to a nice family cruise – on a Pedalo – the trio find themselves castaways on a tropical island inhabited by some angry natives. After Wilma and Herbert are captured, your mission is to help Wally rescue his loved ones and escape the island.

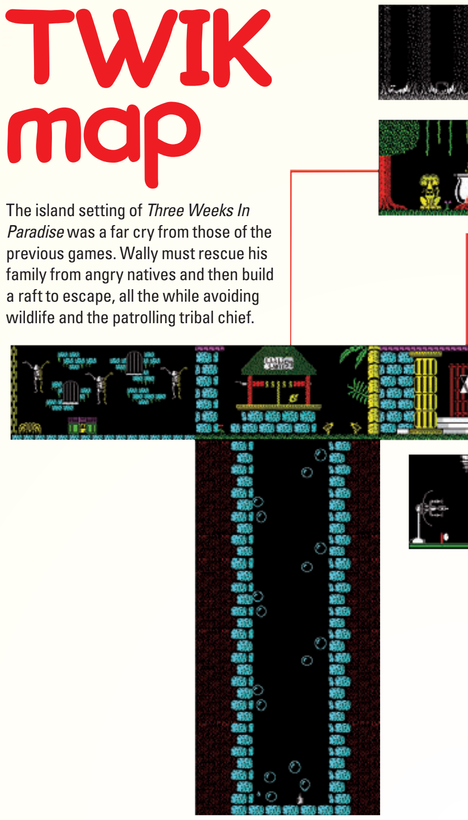




» [ZX Spectrum] *Three Weeks In Paradise*, despite being the last *Wally Week* game, was well-received and seen as a return to form for the series.

TWIK map

The island setting of *Three Weeks In Paradise* was a far cry from those of the previous games. Wally must rescue his family from angry natives and then build a raft to escape, all the while avoiding wildlife and the patrolling tribal chief.

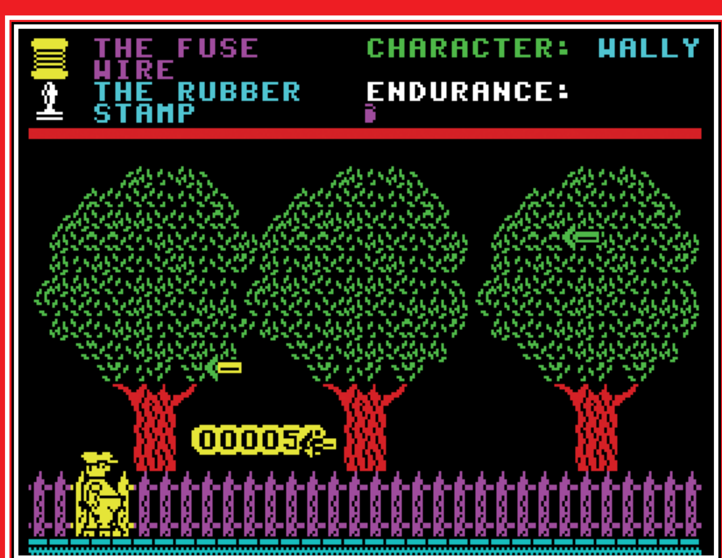


The Wally walk

How far before you gave up?

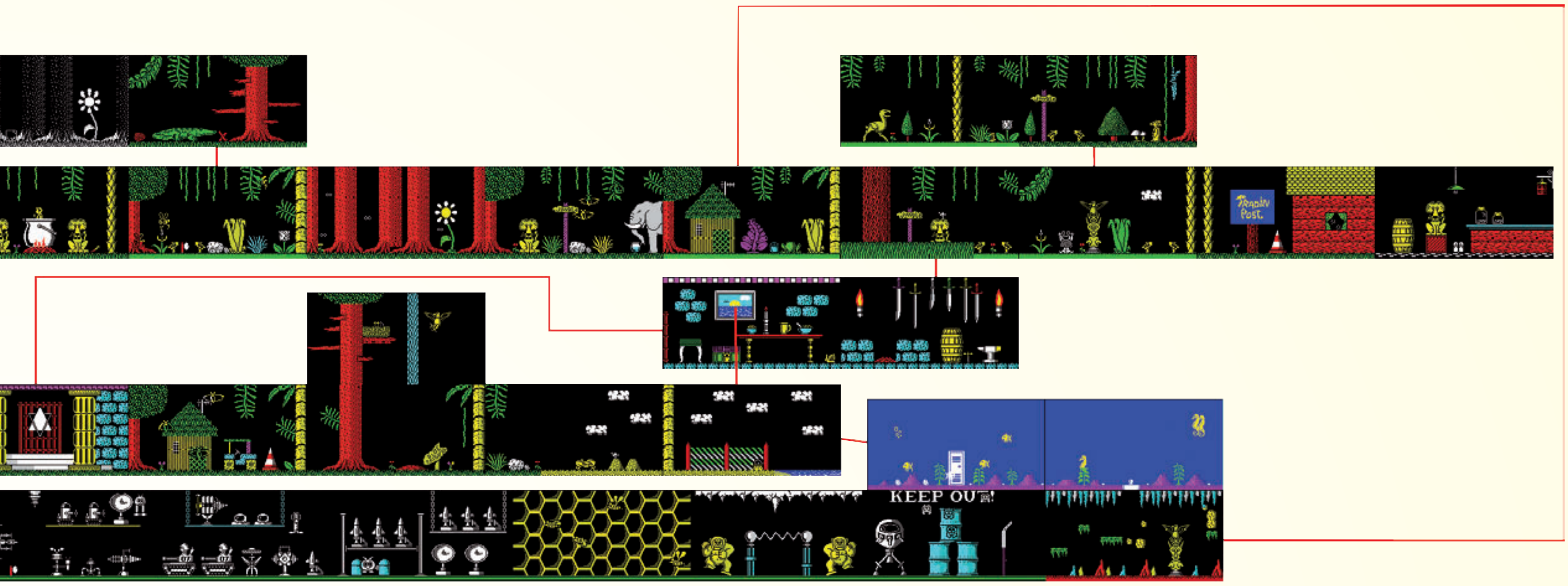
Chris tells us that while working on the *Wally Week* series he was continually thinking up humorous little distractions and in-jokes to include in the game. The most infamous of these gags is found in *Everyone's A Wally*: when the player walks into either screen past Baker Street or Zoo Trunk Road they are met with what seems an endless walk to the next town. We asked Chris whether it was possible to actually walk the distance and, if so, what happens – we only got to 60 screens before we gave up.

"We thought, 'Why don't we have this one location where if you go off at the side of the screen, you'll appear to begin in exactly the same location you started in but a screen away from where you are, and to have the sign count up how many miles you are away from the town?' You could quite literally walk forever. The thing is, we wondered what would happen if you made it so in order to make it back you've got to walk back the whole distance; you can't just walk to the left of the screen and magically appear in the town again. And that's what we did. We'd joke about how far some people would walk before they eventually realised. If I remember rightly it just wraps around when the tally sign fills up."



Everyone's A Wally split opinion among fans. Some argued that the character-swapping dynamic made it too complicated, while others praised it for the ambition of its interwoven adventures. The biggest criticisms, though, stem from the fact that the sub-characters would dynamically go about their business while you weren't controlling them, even picking up objects and moving them around the game world. This meant that trying to find the item you need required a bit of investigative walking.

"Some had thought the game went too cerebral and some of the fun from *Pyjamarama* had been lost. *EAW* was less of a game that you could just pick up and play, and the control system was heading towards being quite complex. That's why in *Three Weeks In Paradise* we decided to go back towards the accessibility and simplicity of the gameplay that *Pyjamarama* had," admits Chris. *Everyone's A Wally* was the last *Wally Week* game that Chris programmed. It was at this point that Mikro-Gen turned its attention to the hardware and licensing space with the release of the Mikro-Plus unit: a 16KB cartridge add-on for the Spectrum. And with Chris itching to turn his talents to other projects and David proving that he was finally ready to



take over the *Wally Week* reins, that's exactly what happened.

Chris tells us that *Three Weeks In Paradise* was solely David's work, with scant input from anyone else. It stands as another apex for the *Wally* series, a testament to Chris's tuition and also David's flair as a programmer. But while *TWIP* would be the most successful game in the series, it also finds itself entwined in the sad tale of Mikro-Gen's collapse.

As we touched on earlier, at the time of David writing *TWIP*, Mikro-Gen had been busy developing an expandable ROM pack for the Spectrum called the Mikro-Plus, which could be plugged in to give the machine an additional 16Kb of memory. The thinking was that the add-on would not only give Mikro-Gen additional memory to play with when writing games but also protect it from piracy. The carts would retail for just a few pounds more than cassette tapes, and the long-term strategy was to license it out to other publishers so Mikro-Gen could rely less on the revenue from in-house software. It was a strategy that could have seen the company dominate the industry, and with publishers and retailers anxiously waiting to sign up for the idea, all Mikro-Gen had to do was ensure the first game that appeared on the technology was half-decent. The obvious choice was *TWIP*. However, this was a two-horse race.

"Everyone, and I mean everyone – distributors, other game publishers, all of them – [was] keen to jump on the bandwagon," reveals Chris, "and all were waiting to see how well the first game was received before licensing the technology. Mikro-Gen would have ruled the business if this had been a success. However, Mike Meek planned to bring two games to market at once using Mikro-Plus: *Three Weeks In Paradise* and *Shadow Of The Unicorn*. But *TWIP* was a few weeks behind schedule. All the programming team, bar the guy that wrote it, thought that *SOTU* wasn't very good and that we should wait and release *TWIP* first, but Mike insisted that *SOTU* shipped first as it was ready. Not only did the reviewers think it wasn't very good, but it also meant that nobody wanted to sign up for Mikro-Plus. Mikro-Gen had loads of ROMs that we couldn't sell, and so we had a cash crisis. The beginning of the end was upon us."

Because of the collapse of the Mikro-Plus unit, Mikro-Gen was forced to abandon the project and David was asked to drop many of the planned sub-games so that it would fit on a cassette. But while it was frustrating at the time, seeing much of his work landing on the cutting-room floor, in hindsight, David admits that it did teach him a valuable lesson to take with him throughout his career.

"It changed my way of thinking. I had lots of content and then in just a few seconds I'd lost a quarter of my storage space and had to delete one in four things. What that meant was I could cherry-pick my favourite parts, so I came away thinking this could be a new development strategy: make too much and pick the best bits!"

Despite the many cuts that David was forced to make, not all of the extra content was lost. At the time Sinclair had been working with its Spanish distributor Investrónica to produce the Spectrum 128 – an upgraded Speccy with an impressive 128KB of memory. With Sinclair looking for games to demonstrate the extra performance, Mikro-Gen released *TWIP* in a 128K version using some of the extra content that fell victim to the Mikro-Plus debacle.

In closing up our time with David and Chris, we asked the pair whether or not Mikro-Gen had plans to continue the *Wally Week* series, had the Mikro-Plus been a success.

"We always intended that *Three Weeks In Paradise* was going to be the last big bang for Wally. It was going to be the biggest *Wally* game we ever had, it was going to be on the Mikro-Plus, and this was going to be Wally going out with a bang. But it was also going to set the company going into hardware and make a lot of money through licensing. But, of course, that never happened."

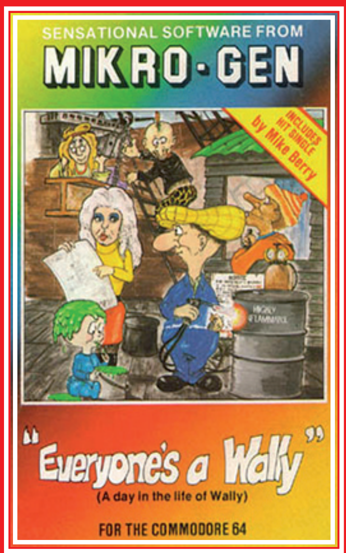
> "Some thought that EAW went too cerebral and lost some of the fun"

B side

Flipping over the EAW cassette yielded a surprise…

Those who bought *EAW* may remember that on side B of the cassette there was a song written and performed by Mike *'Are You Being Served?'* Berry called *Everyone's A Wally*. When we mentioned the song to Chris his response was one of laughter. So after promising him, hand on heart, that we wouldn't attempt to sing it, we asked him to kindly explain how this bizarre marriage of *Wally Week* and Mike Berry actually came about.

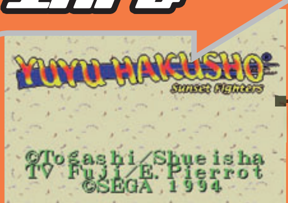
"Everybody thought it was some crazy thing that we decided to do to have this single on the B side of this cassette, but it wasn't. It was actually a really shrewd move. The reasoning was, when you put out a game cassette back then, you'd have the game recorded on both sides, the thinking being that if somebody tried to load side A and it was somehow corrupted they could turn it over and use side B. If it loaded in both sides then that was fine, but what was happening was if it didn't people would send the tape back and complain, requesting a tape where both sides load. So what happened was, as we were getting quite a lot of returns back because side B wouldn't load, we thought, 'Stuff this, we're not going to have the game on side B,' and Mike came up with the idea of having a song instead."



Special thanks to David and Chris for plenty of fond memories and additional screens and illustrations

IMPORT ONLY

INFO



» **PUBLISHER:** TEC TOY (SOUTH AMERICA) SEGA (JAPAN)

» **DEVELOPER:** TREASURE

» **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MEGA DRIVE

» **ALSO ON:** N/A

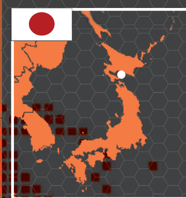
» **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP

» **RELEASED:** 1994

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £50+

» **CO-ORDINATES:** 35°41' N 139°46' E

GAME ORIGIN



» **COUNTRY:** JAPAN
» **POPULATION:** 127,433,494
» **CAPITAL:** TOKYO
» **NATIONAL LANGUAGE:** JAPANESE
» **CURRENCY:** YEN
» **TIME ZONE:** GMT +9

YU YU HAKUSHO SUNSET FIGHTERS

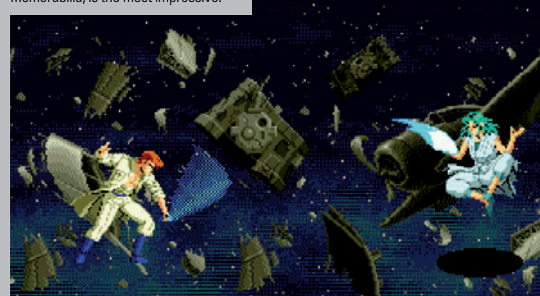
» Unless you hail from Japan or South America, or are into obscure fighting games, you've likely never heard of Yu Yu Hakusho Sunset Fighters. However, it's one of the best 2D fighters of the 16-bit era...

The benefits of retro gaming are twofold. First, it gives you the opportunity to catch up on those classic games that may have passed you by, and second, it allows you to acquire some obscure import title that would have set you back an arm, a leg, and possibly another appendage back in the day, but with a few more readies now at your disposal can be purchased without running yourself ragged shoving newspapers into letterboxes. Sadly, this particular game still fetches arms, legs, and other appendages even today. However, some Mega Drive owners would argue, even in lieu of the excellent Street Fighter IV, that such an investment would be wholly worthwhile.

Why? Well, what we have here is one of the finest 2D beat-'em-ups ever to grace the Mega Drive, and when you consider that Treasure was behind its creation, you can understand why the game is held in such high regard among fighter fans. *Yu Yu Hakusho Sunset Fighters* is a glorious-looking fighting game primed with wonderfully unique anime characters and *Street Fighter*-style moves, all performed using a wonderfully simple control system.

Despite being based on an anime series that never reached our shores and having in-game menus in Japanese, the obscure animated source material and nonsensical text is neither essential nor detrimental to the enjoyment of this game. However, we suspect that a few rounds would probably be enough to pique your interest in the wacky-sounding show upon which the game is based. In a nutshell, the series centres around a young boy called Yusuke who one day heroically saves the life of a dithering idiot by pushing him out of the way of a speeding car as he crosses a busy stretch of motorway. Sadly, Yusuke loses his life in the process and lands himself in the afterlife. Here he learns that, had events played out without Yusuke's intervention, the boy

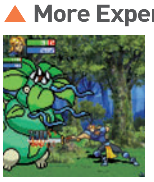
» [Mega Drive] This stage, set among pieces of space debris and WWII memorabilia, is the most impressive.



PRICE WATCH

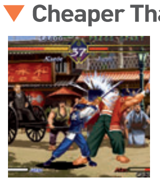
» **Similar titles to splash cash on**

▲ More Expensive Than



GUARDIAN HEROES
GET IT FOR:
£40+
Treasure's *Golden Axe*-style title is as jaw dropping today as it was when it was first dazzling Saturn owners and causing poor, sensitive PlayStation fans to cry into their copies of *Battle Arena Toshinden*. A poor comparison, we know, but there are swords and characters in it.

▼ Cheaper Than



LAST BLADE
GET IT FOR:
£350+
SNK's *Final Blade* is often hailed as the greatest weapon-based fighting game ever, and as we're huge fans of the game, we have to agree. Taking the brilliance of *Samurai Shodown* but adding the complexity of *Garou*, this title is worth the asking price.



» (Mega Drive) It features plenty of characters ripped from the anime, such as Elder Toguro.



» [Mega Drive] Some of the special moves are spectacular, as Yusuke kindly demonstrates for us.



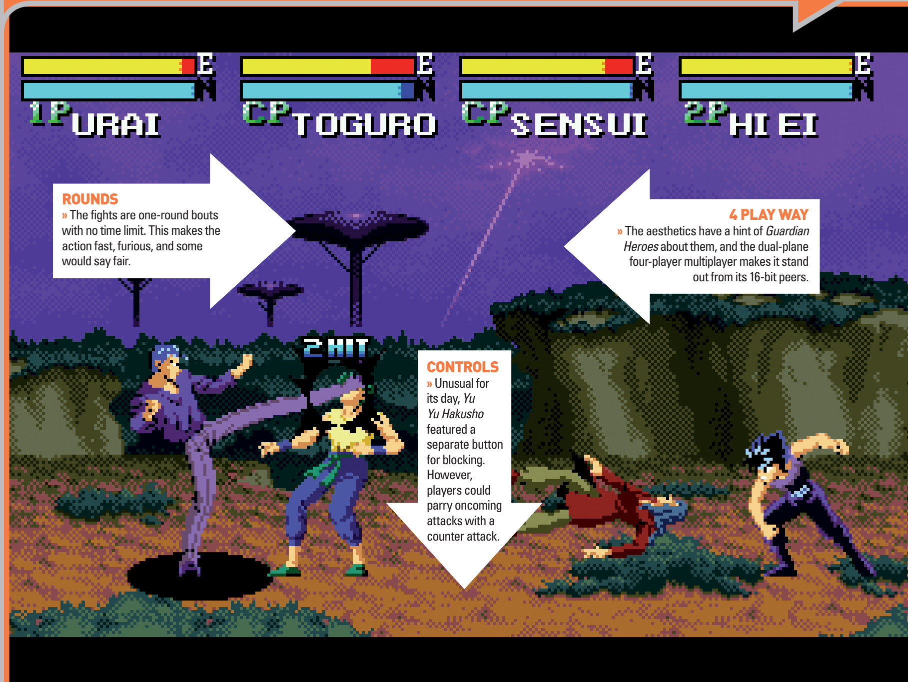
» [Mega Drive] In 1994 *Yu Yu Hakusho Gaiden*, an RPG, was released for Mega Drive.



» [Mega Drive] There are some neat visual effects showcased throughout the game.

GO DEEPER

What to look for when playing Sunset Fighters



"Yu Yu Hakusho boasted slick animations and wonderfully detailed character sprites that would certainly look right at home on the glorious battlefields of Guardian Heroes"

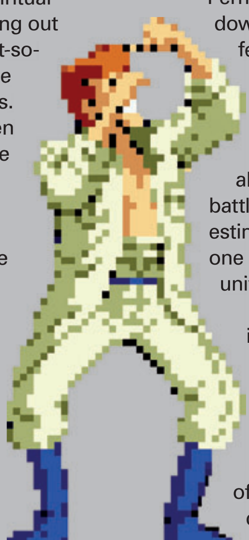
SEE, THERE'S NO REASON NOT TO BUY IT



he saved would have only received a minor scratch from the collision, and thus Yusuke's act of selfless heroism was completely unnecessary. Following this shocking discovery, Yusuke becomes something of a spiritual gumshoe, a bit like Jennifer Love Hewitt, helping out good spirits, demons and deities and other not-so-good spirits, demons and deities, and of course much fighting and loud girly screaming ensues.

Street Fighter II fever was in full swing when *Yu Yu Hakusho* was in development, and once Treasure had secured the videogame licence for this depressing-sounding animation, it quickly set about putting the show's fulsome roster of characters into a fighting game while adding enough elements to separate it from the usual clutch of beat-'em-ups that were saturating the market.

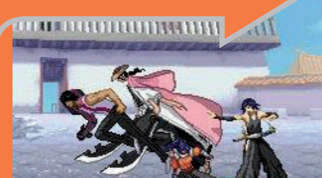
As well as 11 wonderfully varied and diverse-looking combatants, *Yu Yu Hakusho* boasts slick animations and detailed character sprites that would look right at home on the battlefields of *Guardian Heroes*, a sentiment supported by the dual-plane *Fatal Fury*-style fight mechanic. Treasure also plied the game with some wonderful moves, a tactile three-button control system (although the game is six-button compatible), and some great music for gamers to wrap their earlobes around.



Perhaps the only thing that lets *Yu Yu Hakusho* down is the drab backgrounds, which, despite featuring some impressive parallax scrolling, feel unfinished against the impressive polish of the rest of the game. Perhaps the most notable aspect of *Yu Yu Hakusho* is that, through the magic of the multitap, the game allows up to four players to participate in a battle royale match up, which, according to our estimations, makes it the first four-player one-on-one console fighting game in the history of the universe… possibly.

Sadly, the game was only officially released in Japan and, a little later, in South America courtesy of Sega hardware and software partner Tec Toy. As a result, few copies exist in the world today, which is why it can trade hands for some pretty large sums. In the game's defence it is by far one of the slickest Mega Drive games you can come by, and would take pride of place in any Mega Drive collection.

CAN'T IMPORT? YOU COULD TRY



BLEACH

» Treasure was responsible for developing the first two *Bleach* titles on Nintendo DS, also based on another Japanese anime. Both the *Bleach* titles borrow heavily from *Yu Yu Hakusho* and actually feel like spiritual successors in many ways. But the *Bleach* games are far easier to come across and much easier on the wallet.

THE MAKING OF...

Stunt Race FX



Jonti Davies meets up with fellow Kyoto resident Giles Goddard, lead programmer on a string of Nintendo classics and now an independent collaborator with NCL, to talk about the FX of Stunt Race gaming

I'm nursing a pint of Kilkenny in an Irish pub in the centre of Kyoto, waiting for Giles Goddard to show up. He describes himself as being "tekitou" – haphazard, nonconformist, unreliable – so I'm half-expecting him to be late. He was late when we last met for an interview five years ago, at Kyoto's Q-Games studio, run by his friend and one-time Nintendo colleague Dylan Cuthbert, and he inevitably turns up just as I finish my pint. He apologises and makes up for it by buying the next round, so I shouldn't really complain.

After catching up over Guinness, the conversation turns towards what we've agreed to discuss for the benefit of **Retro Gamer**-reading SNES fans everywhere: the development of *Stunt Race FX*. The first surprise is that Giles doesn't even own a personal copy of this game, despite it being his idea, led by his programming skills during his stint working inside NCL at the beginning of the Nineties. I produce the instruction manual for the local Japanese version of the game – "I would have brought the packaging, too, but I thought this would suffice to jog your memory", I explain – and Giles looks equally mystified and impressed. "Wow," he says. "It's the first time I've seen that. We had to buy our own copies of games in Nintendo – they still do, actually, people who work for Nintendo – so I didn't bother. I've downloaded the ROM, but I never bought an original copy of the game."

Examining the cover, Giles seems to be journeying back to 1993. "I remember these clay models pictured on the cover," he says. "It was one of the shape designers, Imamuro, who made these – some guy at Nintendo. We thought it was quite sort of radical of Nintendo to go with that idea, because the usual thing to do was to have a main character in the centre, you know, a typical graphic. I think this is probably one of the first Nintendo manuals to use real objects in the artwork. I think they should have made them out of something edible, though – not clay… marzipan. And then they could have had a whole line of *Wild Trax* [*Stunt Race FX*'s Japanese title] birthday cakes."

"We had to buy our own copies of games in Nintendo – they still do, actually, people who work for Nintendo – so I didn't bother"

The clay models, charming and inedible as they were, had been based on the cutesy design of the in-game vehicle models, but the cartoon style of the game was not planned from *Stunt Race FX*'s beginnings as an internal Argonaut project. Inevitably, the game's look changed direction at the behest of Nintendo.

While Giles's career began at Argonaut, his 3D programming skills ensured he was one of three Argonaut coders – along with Dylan Cuthbert and Colin Reed – sent to Kyoto to teach NCL how to make Super Famicom games that utilised the Argonaut-developed Super FX chip. Giles says that the initial idea for *Stunt Race FX* was his, and it was formed before he had ever set foot in Japan: "When I was in Argonaut, before we were doing *Star Fox*, I was doing this prototype for a stunt-car type game. There was Geoff Crammond's *Stunt Car Racer* on the Amiga, which I thought was really cool, and it was supposed to be a homage to that. I really wanted to develop a theme where you could drive on ridiculous courses with loops and such, but it turned into something a bit more cute, a bit less extreme…"



» **[SNES]** Giles revisited the freestyle ethos of Stunt Trax mode (pictured here) in his groundbreaking work on *1080° Snowboarding* a few years later.

» [SNES] Achieving a relatively smooth two-player split-screen mode was "really easy so long as we compromised by making the windows smaller", according to Giles Goddard.



Once Giles and friends – who were still Argonaut employees at that point, just 'on loan' to NCL – had arrived in Japan, Nintendo's first SFX-related project was *Star Fox*. It was only after Fox McCloud's debut had been completed that Giles found the opportunity to revive his then-dormant plan for a stunt-car game: "It would have been, like, we've finished *Star Fox*, so what do we make now? We came up with the plan for *Stunt Race FX* because this is the game I originally wanted to do before *Star Fox*. I was interested in *Star Fox*, but I was working on this thing back in the UK before we even began developing *Star Fox*. Argonaut was going to make its own stunt-car type game using the SFX Chip, but then *Star Fox* came out and that got put on hold."

The most significant twist on Giles Goddard's idea was implemented mid-development, when eyes were tacked on to the game's vehicles in order to achieve a friendlier appearance. "It didn't have any character," Giles explains, "and if you want to give something character… I mean, you can draw a picture of a cockroach and it looks horrible, but give it two eyes and it suddenly just looks really cute. The eyes weren't my idea, but looking at the pictures now, it actually adds quite a bit. It's kind of a Pixar cuteness, like *Cars* or whatever."

As lead programmer, what Giles principally brought to the *Stunt Race FX* team was a knack for coding 3D games – as did fellow Brit coder Colin Reed, who was also part of the team. I ask whether, apart from the

IN THE KNOW

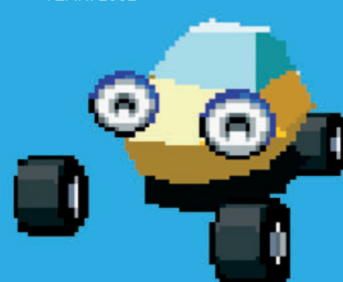
» PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
» DEVELOPER: EAD
» RELEASED: 1994
» GENRE: FREESTYLE RACING
» EXPECT TO PAY: £10

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

SUPER MARIO 64
SYSTEM: NINTENDO 64
YEAR: 1996

1080° SNOWBOARDING
SYSTEM: NINTENDO 64
YEAR: 1998

DOSHIN THE GIANT
SYSTEM: 64DD/GAMECUBE
YEAR: 2002



» The mid-development addition of eyes gave *Stunt Race FX* a friendly visage a world away from what the game's creator originally had in mind.



» [SNES] A cheeky plug for Argonaut's Super FX chip. Can you blame them?



» [SNES] Mario, Fox McCloud, Kirby, Luigi, an Arwing – they're all here.



» [SNES] The first-person perspective made the action look more like a serious simulation, but Giles says he "can't understand how anyone could play it like that".

British forces, any of the Japanese Nintendo staff were familiar with working in 3D. "We had Kimura-san on our team," Giles says. "He was the programmer on *Super Mario Kart*, but Mode 7 was all fake 3D. The SFX Chip was actually real 3D. Everything was polygons apart from the eyes and the wheels on the cars. That means for the main body and the track everything was rendered as polygons by the SFX chip. *Stunt Race FX* was probably about 15fps in the end. It started off as 20 when we didn't have a track. [Laughs.] It was really nice because this car was moving around, doing all these really cool physics… The car was actually calculating torques and forces and all that to get its orientation, and you had four forces… Basically all of the calculations were in proper 3D. So it felt really nice at 20fps."

There were two main reasons for *Stunt Race FX*'s imposed frame-rate limitations: one was a matter of technology; the other was down to Nintendo's stringent quality control. "On this version of the chip," Giles explains, "we were limited to probably 2,000 polygons or so per frame. This was the second-generation Super FX chip [the first generation was used in *Star Fox*], so it was better than the chip we used on *Star Fox*: it could draw more polygons, basically. The interesting thing about the Super FX Chip is that you could set the clock speed on it, but when it was overclocked it got buggier. We had a version of *Star Fox* that was running at a really nice, clean 20fps, but it was a bit buggy, so officially we weren't allowed to use the overclocking function. When the chip went into mass production, they couldn't guarantee that all the chips would work the same way. Overclocking basically worked, but we couldn't guarantee that everyone would be able to use it, so Nintendo only permitted us to use the slower mode."

The result of this was that *Stunt Race FX* was slow yet also remarkably smooth and structurally quite sound. There aren't many noticeable frame drops, I posit, and that contributes to the overall effect, to which Giles replies: "The interesting thing about frame drops is that the slower you get, the fewer frame drops you get, because you have more and more time to draw stuff. *Stunt Race FX* was slow in a smooth way. Back then you could only do 3D with custom hardware, so just the fact that it was moving 3D graphics kind of distracted people from the fact that it was running at an awful frame rate."

Pete Warnes and Carl Graham, who remained stationed at Argonaut in the UK, were responsible for the design of the architecture of the various iterations of the SFX chip, and Giles, Dylan and Colin would make requests according to the needs of their games. Pete and Carl would quickly comply by finding ways to accommodate those demands, and so the chip gradually evolved during and between its production. One benefit of the second-generation Super FX chip was its enhanced sprite-pushing options. "You couldn't really draw a lot of polygons at 20 frames per second," Giles explains, "so we'd use the sprite engine on the SFX chip

"There was Geoff Crammond's Stunt Car Racer on the Amiga, which I thought was really cool, and Stunt Race FX was supposed to be a homage to that"

Car Selection

With a choice of only five vehicles, Giles Goddard and team worked hard to ensure variation in their styles and structures: "The bike [the 2WD] and the big truck [the trailer, only playable during certain passages of Speed Trax mode]," Giles says, "were separate to everything else in *Stunt Race FX*. The truck was in two parts, with the front part pulling the trailer – it was a way of screwing with the controls. It was a lot harder to drive the truck than the 4WD, the F-Type or the Coupé. It was all physics-based, so it was just a matter of making a heavy mass with four wheels and a smaller mass with four wheels and joining them up… and it works almost automatically. The time-consuming thing was tweaking it to make it playable, but animation and movement-wise it all just works. "Having said that, with the bike, when you lean into the curve, I didn't really know how to do that properly or how to simulate that in a fun way. So what I ended up doing was putting the centre of gravity below the ground, so that when it went round the corner the gravity would pull it out to one side. It's cheating, obviously, but when it slows down, the bike in *Stunt Race FX* automatically centralises. It can't fall over, because the weight is under the ground. Bikes are very different from cars, obviously. [Laughs.] Fewer wheels. [Follows a protracted demonstration and hypothetical discussion of the physics of a bicycle, using a couple of beer mats and an iPhone.] The cars, though, were really easy to build, because you've basically just got four points and a cube."

Revealed: The Inner Workings Of NCL (circa 1993)

"At the time, EAD was made up of about 100 people," Giles recalls, "and there were only about 15 programmers and 15 designers in the whole of the division. EAD's section chief, Fukui-san, he always left everything up to the creative people. EAD was the fun side of Nintendo. The games that R&D did, like *Super Metroid*, were very different from EAD's games. There was another group called SRD, too, which was a different company inside Nintendo, and they did all of the Yoshi and Wario games, mostly not the core franchise games. They were in a separate building as well: there were three buildings, one for each of the groups, and they all worked very differently.

"EAD was doing *Stunt Race FX* and *Star Fox 2*, and we were right next to each other: Dylan's lot and my lot. We were in the same room, but there was a partition in the middle. You'd have to poke your head around the corner to talk to anyone [on the other team], so Dylan made this really cool little chat application in DeskView, which was a multitasking operating system for the PC. It was a bit like MSN, so we used to just talk bollocks. Random shit, for hours, just coming up with emotes like '/fart: Giles turns in your direction and farts'. [Laughs.] Colin was there as well, three of us gaijin in this little cubicle, spread about what was basically a programming area with five or six programmers on each team. The designers would be at one end of the room and programmers at the other end of the room – that's the way they used to do it in NCL."



» [SNES] This underwater section was, Giles explains, "the least intensive area because it was drawn so simply", but that didn't stop it from looking phenomenal.

"Miyamoto usually just talks gibberish. Maybe it's deliberate – some kind of diversionary tactic to keep you unawares"

to draw the sprites on top of the polygons. It was really quick at drawing sprites, and you could rotate them and do all sorts of stuff and expand them. If you think about it now, it's all stuff we take for granted, but having scalable, expandable sprites was a big deal on the Super Famicom. You couldn't scale and rotate sprites at the same time just using normal sprites, but thanks to the SFX chip these things became possible. *Yoshi's Island* was the first game that didn't even use the three-dimensional side of the SFX chip, it just used the sprite engine."

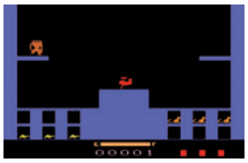
While Giles and Colin provided invaluable programming assistance, the rest of the *Stunt Race FX* team displayed the qualities for which Nintendo has always been renowned. "They applied their own way of making games to 3D," Giles says. "We came from the English traditional way of making 3D, but they had a different way of making games and came from a spritey background. One of the designers had worked on *F-Zero* as a shape designer, and course design is what the *F-Zero* team were really good at, so the designers basically thought up all of the track layouts. We learned game design from them. Nintendo is the master of game design – probably because it does so many iterations. Someone like Miyamoto is not afraid to try something out, spend weeks on it, and then just dump it and try something else. Back in that time, there weren't proper fixed schedules. The entire game design was open to change at any time. I think any good game should be like that."

Shigeru Miyamoto is credited as 'producer' of *Stunt Race FX* and I finally ask Giles to explain what the great man was like to work with. "To be honest, Miyamoto usually just talks gibberish," Giles laughs. "No, actually he usually talks at a tangent. He says something that isn't related to anything else, and then it eventually gets back to what he wants to actually talk about. Maybe it's deliberate, some kind of diversionary tactic to keep you unawares…"

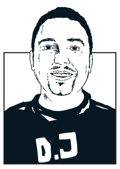


SKY SKIPPER

A THRILLER WITH GORILLAS



- **PUBLISHER:** PARKER BROTHERS
- **RELEASED:** 1983
- **GENRE:** ACTION
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ATARI 2600
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £10+



HISTORY

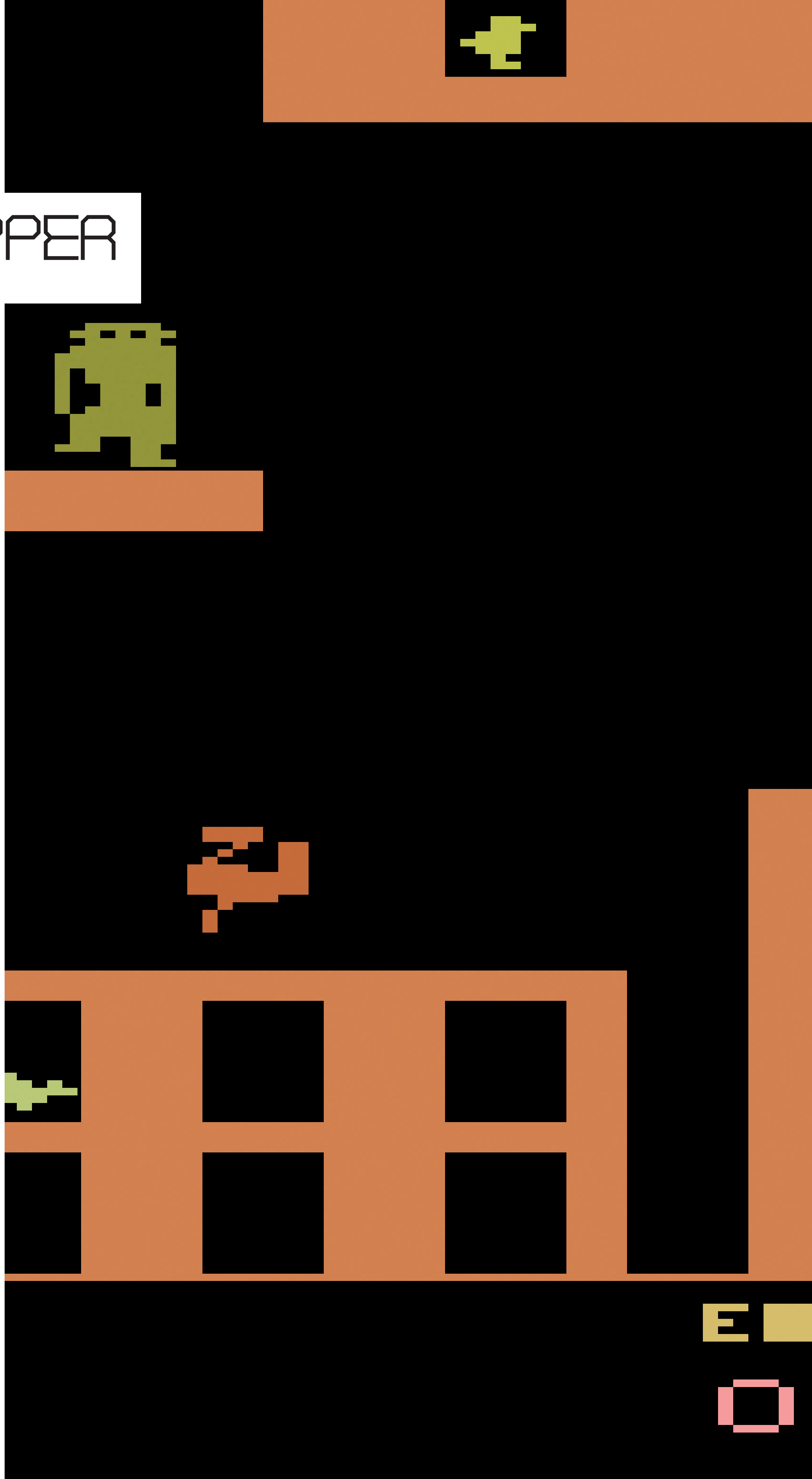
What do you get when you cross a biplane with *Donkey Kong*? We're not sure exactly either, but we'd hazard a guess that if this bizarre union ever did take place, Parker Brothers' wonderful *Sky Skipper* could have easily been the result.

Taking on the role of a plucky pilot, your aim is to simply rescue a number of caged critters from a gorilla enforced captivity. Now we've no idea why gorillas are enslaving other animals, but hey, who are we to judge? We're just glad we get to enjoy such an enjoyably nutty game.

So anyway, sitting in your biplane, which has the handy ability to drop bombs, you need to line yourself up with the gorilla overlords and drop your dangerous payloads on their heads. As soon as the great beasts are stunned, the captured animals will leap forth from their cages and you'll have a few precious seconds to capture as many as possible. Successfully clear a stage of all its imprisoned animals and you'll move on to the next, far tougher, screen.

The most impressive aspect of *Sky Skipper*, though, is just how polished it feels. There's a slickness to the 2600 game that you'd normally expect to find from Activision, while the simple yet oh-so-addictive gameplay constantly drags you back for one more go. Initially the screens you have to negotiate are fairly straightforward, but as the stages progress, the layouts and gorilla placements become ever more perilous. It takes a huge amount of skill to weave your tiny plane through the ever-narrowing nooks and crannies, and as the timer continues to count down you'll need amazingly quick reflexes in order to rescue every last trapped creature.

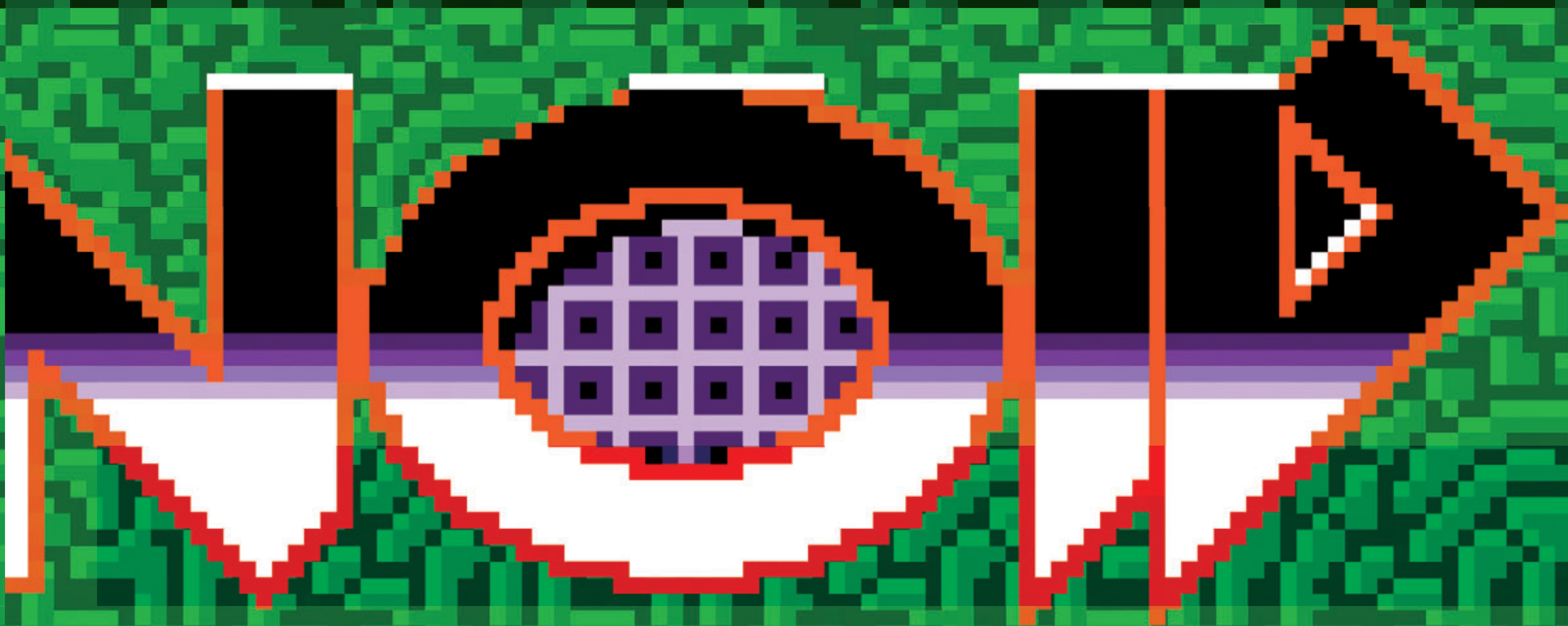
Never mind its functional looks and bleepy bloopy sound effects – although I love its opening at the start of each stage. *Sky Skipper* is an addictive little blaster that proves that it wasn't just Activision that could make amazing 2600 games.




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1460

THE DEFINITIVE

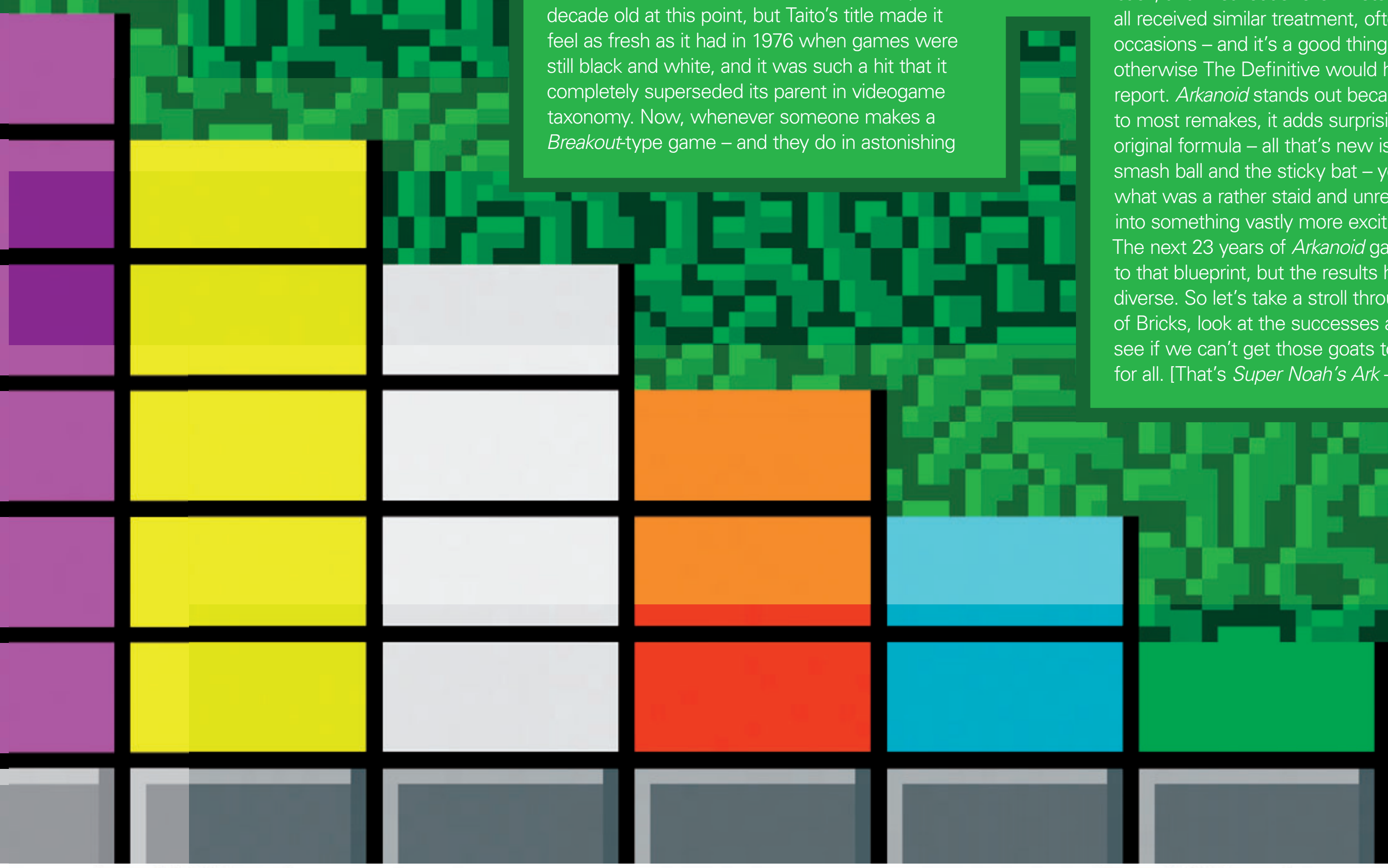
In which Stuart Campbell hunts down gaming's very own elusive Area 51



We're all now familiar with the notion of taking a popular old game and updating it for a more modern audience. But to anyone under the age of 30, it'll seem very weird that there was once a time when such a concept hadn't been invented. And yet there was. When Taito unveiled its newest arcade game in 1986, nobody had ever seen the like before. Here, for the first time, was an unmistakeably old game – someone else's old game, at that – revamped and polished for a contemporary age with power-ups and laser guns and shiny graphics. And it went down a storm.**

Arkanoid's ancestor *Breakout* was already a decade old at this point, but Taito's title made it feel as fresh as it had in 1976 when games were still black and white, and it was such a hit that it completely superseded its parent in videogame taxonomy. Now, whenever someone makes a *Breakout*-type game – and they do in astonishing numbers, including a few official follow-ups for the PlayStation and Jaguar around the turn of the millennium – it will inevitably be dubbed an '*Arkanoid* clone', much to Atari's chagrin.

Since *Arkanoid*, the game industry hasn't looked back, and *Breakout*'s fellow veterans have almost all received similar treatment, often on multiple occasions – and it's a good thing, too, because otherwise The Definitive would have nothing to report. *Arkanoid* stands out because, compared to most remakes, it adds surprisingly little to the original formula – all that's new is the laser, the smash ball and the sticky bat – yet it transformed what was a rather staid and unrewarding game into something vastly more exciting and compelling. The next 23 years of *Arkanoid* games have adhered to that blueprint, but the results have been wildly diverse. So let's take a stroll through the Museum of Bricks, look at the successes and failures, and see if we can't get those goats to sleep once and for all. [That's *Super Noah's Ark* – Ed]



THE DEFINITIVE ARKANOID



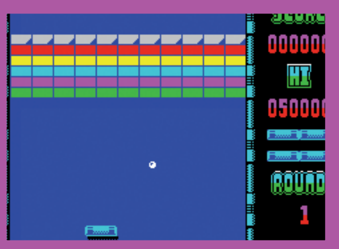
» [NES] For some reason, the last of the NES's extra levels recalls *Manic Miner*.

1986 Arkanoid

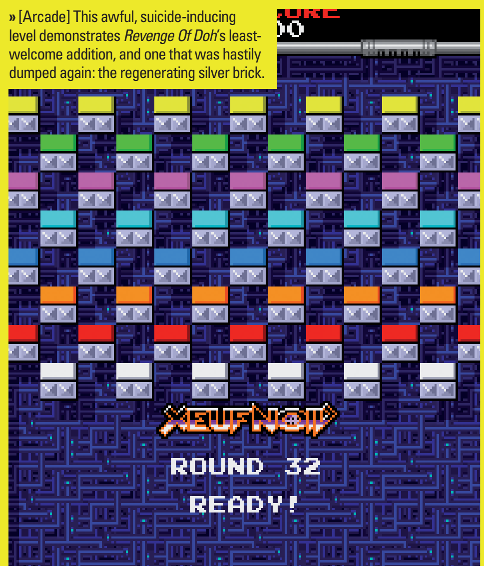
[ARCADE, ALMOST EVERYTHING ELSE]

NOT SURPRISINGLY, GIVEN its low technical demands, *Arkanoid* is one of the most ported videogames of all time. It's appeared on the Spectrum, MSX, TRS80, NES, and MS-DOS (with playfields 11 blocks wide instead of 13, and requiring some tweaking of level layouts), as well as on the Amstrad, C64, Apple II, Atari 800, ST, Amiga (with selectable starting rounds between 1 and 20), and even in monochrome on the early Macintoshes.

Almost every port is of good quality – the Amiga being particularly well-received – but the best overall is probably the NES game, which comes with three extra levels at the end and was also sold with a dedicated paddle controller. Except in Europe, of course.



For some reason, *Arkanoid* hasn't featured on any of Taito's many retro compilations. Unconfirmed rumours suggest possible Atari copyright issues with regard to the game's similarities to *Breakout*, although given the ongoing release of sequels, that seems doubtful.

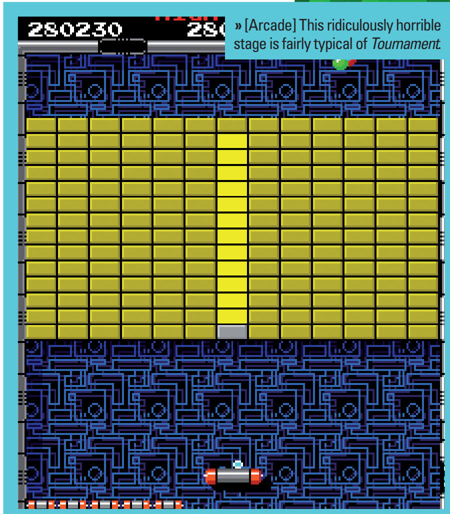


» [Arcade] This awful, suicide-inducing level demonstrates *Revenge Of Doh*'s least-welcome addition, and one that was hastily dumped again: the regenerating silver brick.

1987 Tournament Arkanoid

[ARCADE]

TAITO'S US LICENSING policy has provided a rich stream of material for The Definitive to mine over the years, with the company hawking its intellectual property Stateside to companies like Midway, generating countless semi-official non-canon sequels like *Space Invaders Deluxe*. The policy was very much in force in the Eighties, and licensee Romstar was quick to take advantage by knocking out this quick mod kit, released on New Year's Day, to prolong the life of *Arkanoid* before the official follow-up arrived. It features 33 new levels, and as the name might lead you to suspect, they're pretty hardcore, with almost every one plated with silver and gold bricks.

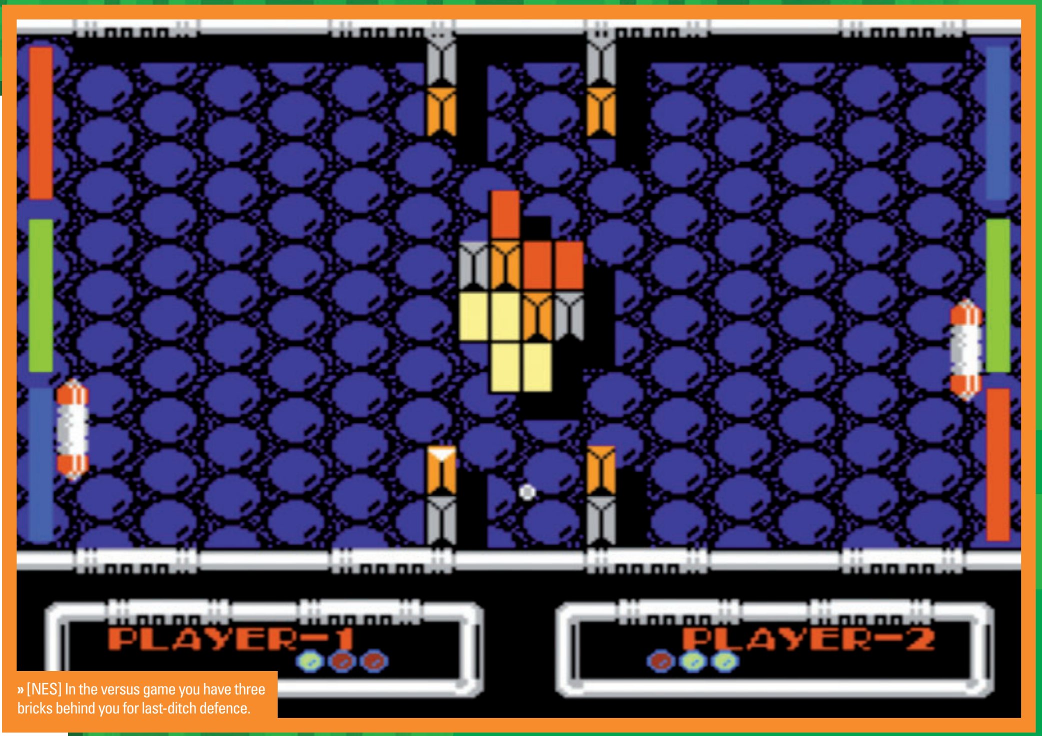


» [Arcade] This ridiculously horrible stage is fairly typical of *Tournament*.

1987 Arkanoid: Revenge Of Doh [ARCADE]

YOU KNOW YOU'RE in for a hard time when you kick off Round 1 in the 'real' sequel to *Arkanoid* and note that, rather than the 78 bricks you have to knock out in the first game's opening level, here you're going to have to make a whopping 146 hits. Round 2's right-hand path similarly features 168 bricks compared to the first game's 91. The speed has been cranked up too, and in most respects *Revenge Of Doh* pretty much just takes the original *Arkanoid* and doubles it.

Although you still have to beat 32 levels of bricks to reach Doh, there are, in fact, 65 distinct stages to play, arranged in a two-column tower-like structure, which means you'll have to play through the whole game a minimum of two times to see every round. There are also twice as many capsule types, including a 'smash ball' that ploughs through bricks without bouncing and a special mystery capsule that can bestow various super power-ups including a 'ball plague', comprising dozens of normal or smash balls, or a rapid-fire turbo laser.



» [NES] In the versus game you have three bricks behind you for last-ditch defence.

1988

Arkanoid: Revenge Of Doh (HOME FORMATS)

WHILE THE MANY home ports of *Arkanoid* were largely extremely faithful to the source – and therefore not particularly noteworthy in terms of The Definitive's remit – when it came to the sequel, things went very screwy, with everyone and his dog deciding to muck about and change all the rules. Even the arcades weren't totally immune to this outbreak of individuality, with the American coin-op release (licensed to Romstar) deciding to put the rounds in a different order from the original Taito version that appeared in Japan and Europe, but it was the home conversions that really threw a spanner in the works.

The Spectrum version, for example, jiggles the level order around some more, and also completely omits two of the coin-op rounds – Round 23 from the right-hand path and Round 10 from the left if you're counting in Taito notation – in favour of stages spelling out the initials of coder Mike Lamb and artist Ron Fowles. It's not done there, though. It also confusingly changes the capsule letters for no obvious reason and makes them all the same colour, and introduces a new one of its own: SC (no relation), which causes the backdrop to scroll, turning a game that's already pretty tough on the old peepers due to Fowles going postal with the stippling tool into an eye-torturing horror show until you collect another SC capsule to make it stop.

Other capsules also behave unlike any other version. Collect two Extend capsules in a row and, rather than increasing your size even further, the second one shrinks your bat back to its original size. Conversely, the M capsule that generates a three-way regenerating ball can now be doubled to give you up to six balls that are almost impossible to lose. The smash ball is gone from normal play, accessible randomly from the Special capsule. And finally, Spectrum *Revenge Of Doh* is the only *Arkanoid* game on any format ever where the ball launches to the left from your bat, rather than the right.

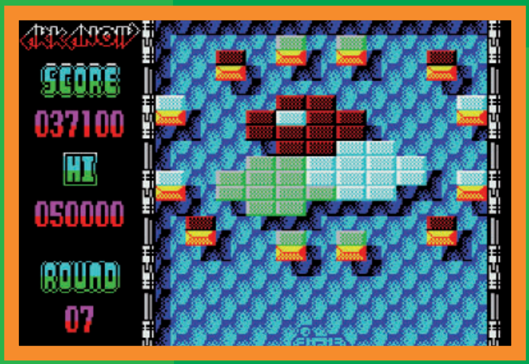


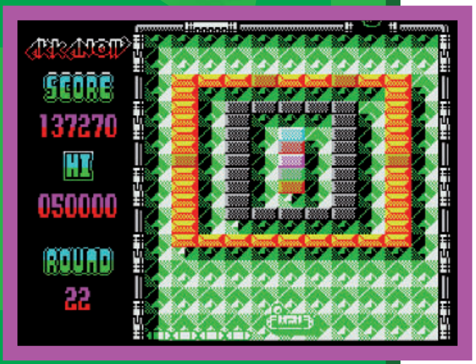
More fun is the NES version. For a start, there's an odd little playable mini-round with Doh before you even get to the title screen, perhaps meant as a sort of 'last time on *Arkanoid*' reminder of the end of the previous game. Second, the game handles the power-up capsules in a weird and unique way – the first time you hit a brick containing one, the capsule appears but doesn't drop out of the wall. Instead it cycles through different types of capsule until you hit it again or a few seconds have passed, at which point it stops cycling and falls down to be collected. And third, there's a rather limited Edit mode. The best feature, however, is a very cute versus game based on *Pong* and resembling the Neo Geo classic *Windjammers*, in which you play the best of five rounds against the CPU or a human, on stages orientated sideways.

The MSX version also has the pre-title mini-round and a variant on the *Pong* versus game, although capsules drop normally. Weirdly, you retain some power-ups between levels. Finish a round with the laser, extended bat or twin bat – but NOT the sticky bat – and you'll start the next stage still in possession of it, which can change the game quite radically.

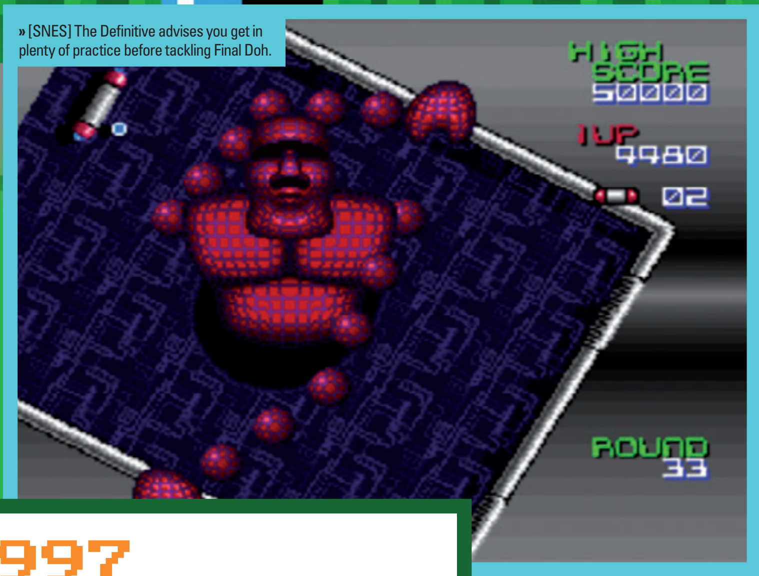
The CPC version, meanwhile, demands from the start that silver bricks, including the regenerating ones, be hit four times to destroy them - the arcade starts at just twice – making even the first round a drawn-out and gruelling chore to complete.

Man, that's, like, way enough on the home ports of *Revenge Of Doh*.





THE DEFINITIVE ARKANOID



» [SNES] The Definitive advises you get in plenty of practice before tackling Final Doh.



» [Arcade] Round 52 of the arcade game, never seen by anyone in an arcade.

1997
Arkanoid: Doh It Again (SNES)

PERHAPS WORN OUT as a result of this outbreak of creativity, *Arkanoid* took it easy for the next decade, but it came back in style with this excellent SNES-exclusive sequel. In fact, *Doh It Again* has subsequently provided the core of most mobile phone ports, although they dispense with the subtitle and just call themselves *Arkanoid*. A slightly narrowed playfield – ten bricks wide rather than thirteen – upped the pace and kept the action moving, and players face a whopping 99 rounds before the climactic battle with Doh, although there are only 33 distinct stages, which cycle through three times. Aliens can now turn into bricks or capture the ball and teleport it around, and they can also be introduced into the playfield from the sides as well as the top. There are also various nice-looking backdrops beautifying the whole experience.

You get three different two-player modes: Game A is standard turn-taking; Game B has both players on screen at once, one above the other with positions alternating every level; and Game C is a split-screen affair, whereby when one player misses the ball the other scores a point and both move on to a new level, best of three winning.

Doh It Again's best feature is Doh himself. Before you meet him you'll have had to defeat mini-bosses every 11 levels. Some of them are increasingly tough snake-type creatures and some of them are normal versions of Doh surrounded by mini-Dohs, but the big boss is another proposition entirely. He's been working out since you last saw him and now has a torso and arms as well as a head, and he puts the latter to good use, stretching his arms out to grab the edges of the screen and spin it around in Mode 7, leaving you at the top of the screen with your controls backwards. It's a great multi-stage battle, and by the time you've triumphed you'll really have earned the ending sequence with its incongruous environmental message.

1997 Arkanoid Returns (ARCADE)

THE SECOND PART of Taito's 1997 double-whammy, *Arkanoid Returns* represents one of the great mysteries of arcade gaming, and it's not 'Why did Taito decide to bring out a new *Arkanoid* coin-op while throwing away all the iconic style that made *Arkanoid* popular in the first place and which it had retained in the SNES sequel?'

Returns is a horrible-looking game, binning the beautiful primary colours of the previous games in favour of some hideous pastel earth tones, and the hypnotic silence broken only by the rhythmic chimes of broken bricks has also gone, replaced by some ugly music. You don't even get the fanfare at the start of a round.

The speed has been ramped up drastically, and the only thing *Returns* has in common with its arcade predecessors are the huge walls taking an eternity to clear. Later stages feature some of the most hateful *Arkanoid* levels ever seen, requiring the player to desperately smack the hurtling ball around a completely dead gold-brick zone for minutes at a time, trying to angle the ball sideways into a single gap one brick high. In short, *Arkanoid Returns* is a cynical credit-sucker designed to gobble coins as quickly as possible, regardless of entertainment, constantly apologising for its own cheapness with a stream of largely useless power-ups that fail to balance the horrible, unfair design. It's the *Arkanoid* equivalent of *Metal Slug 3*.

The mystery, though, is something altogether more intriguing. If you read reviews of *Arkanoid Returns* on the internet, they'll all agree on one thing: the game has 50 stages and no boss rounds, with Doh's appearance limited to the intro movie. And sure enough, if you play it and clear round 50, the game dumps you straight to a credits sequence followed by high-score entry and then dumps you back at the title screen. So far so straightforward, but the absence of Doh seemed so odd that we did some investigating and found the Japanese arcade flyer, which clearly depicts a Doh battle looking very much like the one in *Doh It Again*, complete with mini-Dohs and downward-firing lasers.

As alert readers of The Definitive will recall from the world-exclusive unveiling of the long-lost 3D section in *Super Space Invaders '91*, this feature doesn't just let that sort of thing slide, so we started wading around in the MAME cheat options and found a 'select starting level' option that offered 52 rounds. Starting on 51 just went straight to the credits sequence, but Round 52 was a whole new stage, and upon clearing it the game kept on going. In fact, it kept on going and going and going, all the way to Round 100, doubling the size of the game. At that point Doh did indeed show up, with all his little baby Dohs and their lasers, just as shown on the flyer. Defeating him led to a whole new end sequence, clearly the



'proper' finish to the game. But how to access this second half of the game legitimately remained an enigma.

Before you get your hopes up, it still is. We tried everything we could think of to get to Round 52 from within the game, rather than by cheating our way to it. We played right through without continues. We set the region – which unusually appeared on the MAME cheat menu, rather than the DIP switch one, suggesting a possible role – to Japan, and then to the US, without success. We noted that the flyer said: "The boss stage is very challenging and the players must co-operate to defeat him", and we wondered if, like *Bubble Bobble*, the 'true' ending was only available to two players. The flyer, incidentally, is talking cobblers anyway: if you tackle Doh with two players, either one getting killed sends you back to the start of the round. The second player is just a liability, and it's much easier – albeit fractionally slower – to smack down the big fella by yourself.

So we played through the entire game with two players, without continues, without using the Break level-skip capsule, in Japan mode. Still no luck. The only conclusion it seems possible to draw is that, rather like *Super Space Invaders*, the game was chopped in half at the last minute for some reason, and the second 50 levels just blocked off, eternally to remain out of bounds to everyone but hackers. The only apparent way to play the game as it was originally intended is to get to level 50, then just before you hit the last brick use the MAME cheat to skip to 52 and carry on from there. If you know any different, write in and we may reward you with a prize of some description.



» [PlayStation] Alien autopsy not pictured.



2000

Arkanoid 2000

(PLAYSTATION)

WE'RE BEING SLIGHTLY disingenuous with the name of this one, because *Arkanoid 2000* is the US title for what in Japan was released as *Arkanoid Returns*. However, by either name the home port of the coin-op adds a substantial amount of new content, including a whole new 100-level sequel that we're going to treat as a separate game, just to keep things neat.

This leaves a game that reveals just what a naked piece of money-grabbing the coin-op was by slowing down the pace dramatically and exposing the absurd speed of the arcade version as a means of generating continues. Even at its fastest, the PlayStation game is painfully sluggish, and if you collect the 'S' power-up – vital in the arcades – time practically stops completely. Nevertheless, the game is at least playable in the new, slower iteration.

Aside from the Extra game, the remaining modes include a very easy-to-use level editor, with which you can save custom stages to the memory card and play them at someone else's house, and the excellent two-player Squash mode, a versus game where both players are on screen at once and take alternate shots, with each player's bat going transparent when it's not their turn so they can't interfere with the other player's shot. You play a random level, with a choice of 30 seconds, 60 seconds, or until all the blocks are gone, and the player with the most points wins the round, where the best of three rounds is the winner. Sadly there's no CPU opponent, but there's a handicap system for human players, which determines how many points you get if the other player manages to lose the ball off the bottom of the screen.

Meanwhile, we've already had a letter.

"Dear The Definitive,

With reference to your query in the previous entry, the only way to play *Arkanoid Returns* in full, as originally designed, with all 100 rounds including the mysteriously missing 51st level, which was replaced in the arcade game by a premature credits sequence, is to play the PlayStation conversion that you appear to be writing about now. There are no special requirements; just play through the game as normal and after Round 50 you'll carry on through 51, 52 and all the way up to good old Doh at Round 100. What do I win?

Yr pal,

Dr Wolf Hammer, Innsbruck"

Wow! Cheers, Dr W. We'll get back to you on that.

THE DEFINITIVE ARKANOID



2000 Arkanoid Returns Extra (PLAYSTATION)

FOR ALL INTENTS and purposes, *Arkanoid 2000* is really a compilation pack featuring *Arkanoid Returns* and its sequel, and the Extra game – an old Taito tradition, previously seen in other coin-ops like *Bubble Bobble* and *Rainbow Islands* to extend their earning life. It's a worthy follow-up that's better in most respects than the game that went before it. It offers 100 new levels, and its new features include switch blocks, which turn gold bricks into normal ones; special white bricks that ghost in and out of existence and are used to a rather lovely effect on Round 89; and bricks that plummet to the bottom of the screen when hit and kill you if they land on you. There are new power-ups too, including a rainbow-coloured one that functions in almost the same way as the Vanish capsule from the later DS game, wiping out every brick that's the same colour as the next one you hit.

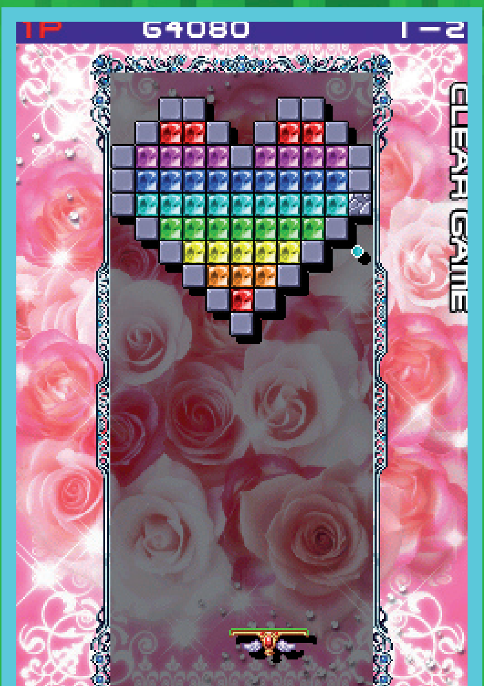
Extra's levels are rather different in tone from those of *Returns*. The first round, for example, gives you just eight bricks to hit, and there are very few of the *Revenge Of Doh*-style war-of-attrition rounds of the previous game, with huge walls full of silver and gold bricks. Particularly in the earlier stages, *Extra* almost verges on a puzzle game. It's even structured much more like traditional *Arkanoid*, with boss fights every 33rd level, and all of them variations on the snake boss from *Doh It Again*. The pace does slow up in the last quarter, particularly during a nasty series of stages from 72-80, and Round 97 is the worst level of any *Arkanoid* game ever, an agonising trial of sheer luck that will typically take you 25-30 minutes to clear. Round 98 is merely spitefully tedious and shouldn't delay you for more than about 15, and then after the third appearance of the snake boss it's time to tackle our old friend Doh again before the end sequence rolls.





» [PlayStation] Here you can see a few of *Extra*'s special blocks, which is a shame because we wanted to show you the level that looks like a whale spouting water out of its blowhole, but it didn't have any in it.





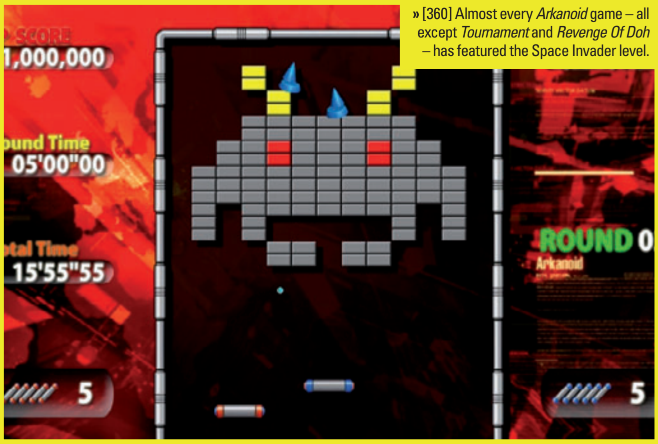
» [DS] Awwww.

2008 Arkanoid DS (DS)

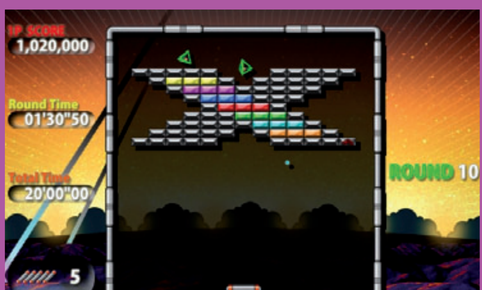
HERE'S THE BIGGEST secret we're going to reveal in this feature, even bigger than the mystery of Area 51: *Arkanoid DS* is actually quite good. Now, if you've played it a bit, understandably you'll probably be shouting at your magazine in outrage, because *Arkanoid DS* at first seems like an atrocity. The playfield is incredibly narrow and tall, with the actual width varying from level to level; the bricks are now square, which makes picking off the last one a chore even more miserable than when it was a rectangle; there's a huge dead zone across the DS's hinge; and the game has a truly hateful propensity for putting gold bricks just on the other side of it so that you only get the tiniest split second to see where the ball's going before it comes back at you through the dead zone again. Where there are original levels amid the 140-ish branching stages – a huge chunk of *Arkanoid DS*'s rounds are taken from the earlier games – they're largely spiteful, joyless gold brick-fests. And adding insult to injury, the Western releases don't even come with the paddle attachment that was bundled with the Japanese version.

But wait. *Arkanoid DS* is so mean-spirited that it doesn't really deserve your persistence, but if you're bloody-minded enough to stick at it anyway, you'll find treasure buried beneath all the rubble. First, as you plough through the different branching routes you'll unlock a special Challenge stage for each round, where you'll have to perform tasks like clearing a certain number of blocks in a short time or even using a limited number of what the game calls 'launches', meaning hits off your bat. You'll also earn points you can spend in the game's shop, unlocking scores of different backdrops, brick styles, sound effects and so on, although actually implementing them is idiotically laborious. After many, many hours of play and total completion of the normal and challenge modes, you'll finally even be allowed to use original *Arkanoid* graphics.

Best of all, though, just at the point when you're cursing the very name of *Arkanoid*, you'll



» [360] Almost every *Arkanoid* game – all except *Tournament* and *Revenge Of Doh* – has featured the Space Invader level.



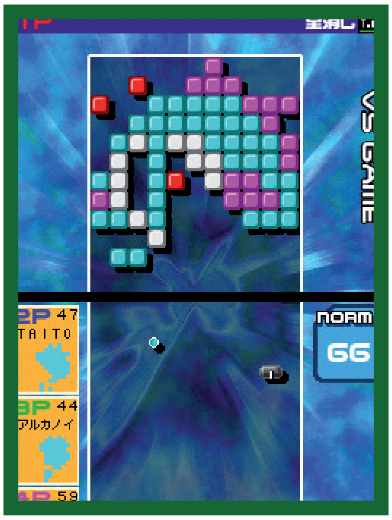
2009 Arkanoid Live (XBOX 360) Arkanoid Plus (WII)

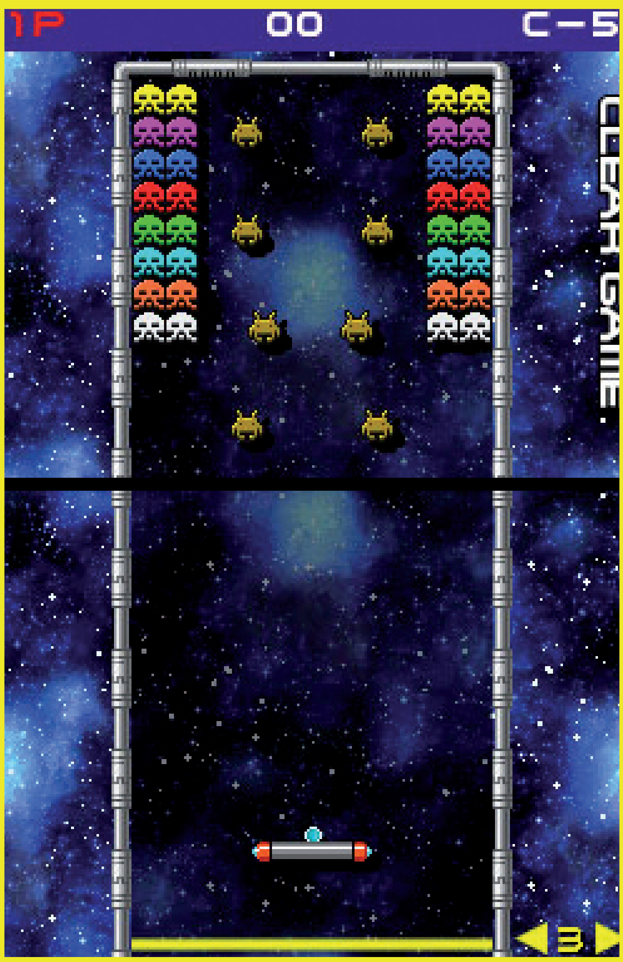
THE TWO MOST recent releases in the *Arkanoid* line are basically the same game under different titles. Something of a return to first principles, it initially looks and plays like a slightly shinier version of the first coin-op. The initial release comprises two 'episodes', which are standalone *Arkanoids* with 31 levels each. The first episode has classic *Arkanoid* graphics, whereas the second has the uglier style of *Arkanoid Returns*/*2000*. The other two episodes currently aren't available and are expected to appear as DLC some time this year.

There are also two main play styles. You can choose a classic 'lives' mode, or a new rule set borrowed from the DS game, where, instead of lives, you have a reflective shield at the bottom of the screen that bounces the ball back when you miss it and can survive a limited – and selectable – number of impacts. Indeed, beyond first impressions, you realise there's a lot of *Arkanoid DS* in here, also including the subtly enhanced control you can affect by moving the paddle as you hit the ball, the variable-width playfields and the same two 'Bust All' or 'Bust Color' versus games against human or CPU opponents. And again, an awful lot of very familiar levels – after over 20 years, is it asking too much for Taito to knock out a few new stages every now and again, instead of flogging us the same ones over and over? At least there are a whole bunch from *Tournament Arkanoid*, though, which have been seen less often.

You get a lot of *Arkanoid* for your 800 Points (Microsoft or Wii), and it learns from most of the mistakes of its predecessors. Fingers are crossed for some new levels in Episodes 3 and 4, and maybe someone could tell Taito's designers that there are better ways of making a round challenging than just lazily stuffing it with gold bricks…

unlock the appropriately named *Uranoid*, which is a new game comprising 35 non-branching rounds that are almost all far better designed than anything in the normal mode. *Uranoid* is also where you'll meet the game's 'proper' boss, a cute little robot – in the ordinary game the 'boss' is a stationary lump of jelly with a bat trapped inside it. It's massively more fun than normal mode, to the extent that it actually starts to make normal mode more enjoyable too, and the fact that it's so hidden away to all but the most doggedly determined player is as tragic as it is stupid.







You're probably wondering why the Sinclair Quantum Leap deserves coverage in **RG**. It was, after all, a business machine with bugger all games, right? Well that's where you'd be mistaken. Join Martyn Carroll as he celebrates the QL's 25th anniversary year by lifting the lid on its best kept secret

SINCLAIR QL

When looking back at the QL, it's easy to get bogged down in the reasons why it was a commercial failure, so let's start by getting that out of the way. The QL wasn't a disaster of C5 proportions, but it barely made a dent in the business machine market when released in 1984. On paper, the QL looked like the perfect package. It was powered by a Motorola 68008 processor, came with 128KB of RAM, housed two internal microdrive storage devices, featured its own multitasking operating system (QDOS) and structured BASIC language (SuperBASIC), and came bundled with a complete office suite. The best bit? All this was yours for £399, at a time when a similar specced IBM PC would have set you back upwards of £2,000.

In order to undercut its rivals so severely and still turn a profit, Sinclair was forced to make crucial compromises to the machine's design. David Karlin was the QL's chief design engineer and he believes that economics compromised the project: "The price point prevented the inclusion of peripherals of an appropriate quality, an essential – and ultimately fatal – omission for the business market." Rather than the core 68000 processor, Sinclair opted for the cheaper 68008 version, which had a smaller address and data bus, limiting the performance of the chip. The biggest cutback, though, was the inclusion of Sinclair's famously unreliable microdrives rather than a standard floppy disk system. "Overwhelmingly, the QL failed because of the microdrives," comments David. "I still think it's highly probable, and thought so at the time, that the QL would have made a much bigger mark had it dropped the microdrives and been bundled with a decent monitor, a floppy disk drive and a printer at, say, £799 instead of £399."

To compound matters, the QL was treated to a trademark Sinclair launch – everything went wrong. Punters waited months for their machines, and when the first models finally arrived they were plagued by software bugs and reliability issues. All of this was diligently reported by the computing press and Sinclair's once strong market image took a battering. Sir Clive predicted that 200,000 QLs would be sold in 1985 alone, yet by the middle of the year, the total sales figure stretching back to its launch in early 1984 stood at just 60,000. Sinclair took drastic action and in September 1985 the price of the QL was slashed in half in a bid to capitalise on pre-Christmas sales. At £199, it moved within easier reach of the hobbyist market and positioned itself as an upgrade option for Spectrum owners. And with that the demand for QL games grew.

Sinclair seemed to have a love/hate relationship with games. On one hand, the success of the Spectrum was fuelled by the abundance of low-cost gaming software available, while on the other, insider rumblings suggested that gaming was seen to be beneath the dignity of the company. David disagrees with reports that gaming was a dirty word within Sinclair: "There were lots of people in the company who understood the gaming market very well and put plenty of work into ensuring that the Spectrum thrived in it, and the QL did its best. If anything, I swam against the tide within the company by focusing the QL resolutely on business." David's initial intention was to develop a pure business machine designed to be hooked up to a monitor, but his hand was forced as the project progressed. "Partway through development, I was told firmly not to alienate it so far from the Spectrum's market, at which point things like the TV interface and joystick ports were added. Retaining a tape port à la the Spectrum was discussed but discarded – the microdrives were supposed to be good enough."

> "The QL wasn't built with gaming in mind, yet it had enough raw power to be competent"

Even with the compromised configuration, the QL wasn't built with gaming in mind, yet it had enough raw power under the hood to be a competent pixel pusher. The 68008 processor was clocked at 7.5MHz, and, despite being hamstrung by narrow buses, it could still carry out complex calculations across the full 32-bit instruction set. There were two generous video modes – 512x256 with four colours and 256x256 with eight colours – and unlike the Spectrum's rudimentary display, each pixel could be assigned its own colour value, which meant no ugly attribute clash. On the downside, the hi-res display occupied 32KB in memory, which was a meaty chunk of screen RAM to funnel around the QL's contended innards.





Year released: 1984

Original price: £399 at launch

Main Processor: Motorola 68008 (running at 7.5MHz)

Secondary Processor: Intel 8049 (running at 11MHz)

RAM: 128KB

ROM: 48KB

Operating system: QDOS

Onboard language: SuperBASIC

Internal storage: Twin microdrives

Display: 512x256 pixels (Mode 4); 256x256 pixels (Mode 8)

Colours: Black, white, red, green (Mode 4); black, white, red, green, yellow, blue, cyan, magenta (Mode 8)

Sound: Single channel oscillator

Associated magazines: *QL User, QL World, QL Today*

Why the Sinclair QL was great…
The very fact that the QL was forged within Sinclair's hallowed halls ensures greatness alone. In all seriousness, the QL did not live up to its rather grand moniker, but its ambitions were admirable and any initial hardware shortcomings were soon sorted using updated chips and expansion boards. Regardless of its commercial fortunes, the QL remains an important Sinclair milestone alongside the ZX80, ZX81 and ZX Spectrum.

Different Versions



Sinclair never significantly developed the core QL design, but a collaboration project with ICL resulted in the One Per Desk, a desktop computer that borrowed the QL's hardware and bolted on a number of 'executive' additions; notably a modem and telephone handset. The machine was also marketed by British Telecom as the Merlin Tonto (pictured). In more recent years, enthusiasts have developed powerful QL clones based around the 68040 and 68060 processors.

Damon Chaplin Q&A

Damon was one of the most celebrated QL programmers back in the day, with a quintet of quality games to his name. He currently resides in the Lake District where he develops Linux software for a living.



■ **Retro Gamer: Can you describe your path to programming games on the QL?**
Damon Chaplin: My first computer was the ZX81, followed by the Spectrum and then the QL. I did some programming in BASIC on the ZX81 and Spectrum, and then ventured into assembly language. My aim had always been to write some games, so when I finally got a QL and an assembler that's what I did. And since *Pac-Man* was one of my favourite arcade games, I couldn't resist trying to emulate that. Hence *Spook* was born.

■ **RG: *Spook* was published by Eidersoft. How did that come about?**
DC: By a strange coincidence my parents bumped into Sir Clive Sinclair in a pub in Cambridge just after I'd finished *Spook*, and he was kind enough to give them Psion's phone number. I thought it was my lucky day, but unfortunately they weren't interested. So I skimmed through the adverts in the QL magazines and noticed that Eidersoft were based fairly close to us in Essex. We visited them and showed them the game, and that was that.

■ **RG: What was the main difficulty you encountered in programming for the QL?**
DC: For me, the graphics were the hardest part. I did get some help for *Spook* and *Deathstrike*, but the others were all my work. Sound was also a problem, due to the strange way that the sound chip was controlled. Each sound effect required a lot of experimentation.

■ **RG: How did you achieve full-screen scrolling in your games?**
DC: The MOVEM (Move Multiple Registers) assembly instruction was the key. You could move quite a few bytes in one go, fairly quickly. It took eight instructions per line of pixels, which wasn't too bad, although it didn't leave much time for the sprites and the rest of the code.

■ **RG: Do you look back on your QL days with fondness, and did your games open any doors for you in later life?**
DC: I was just a student at the time and did it mainly for fun. I never made much money out of any of it, but it helped me through university. The games did help a little when I applied for jobs, but I felt that some companies didn't take it seriously. I went for an interview at a large bank once and was asked to circle the errors on a trivial 30-line piece of C code. I'd written several published games in assembly language, for goodness' sake! Actually, I did miss half the errors, but that's beside the point!

> "It's estimated that as many as 100 commercial games were released for the QL"

(In comparison, the Spectrum reserved just 7KB for the screen.) This pretty much ruled out fast, full-screen scrolling in games, so the majority of them were static-screen affairs.

"I thought being able to have full-colour graphics was critical based on the assumption that the user would want fully bitmapped pictures within documents," says David about the display. "I wasn't so concerned about the speed of shifting things around the screen, which reflected my business versus gaming bias. If I had been designing a raw games machine, I would have worked very differently – no high-resolution mode, no co-processor, and a bit block transfer module in the video card, to name but a few. The QL core was basically fine for a business machine and not all that well suited to games." But this didn't deter software houses from trying regardless, and although it's difficult to elicit an exact figure, it's estimated that as many as 100 commercial games were released for the QL.

The first game of note was *QL Chess*, published by Sinclair stalwart Psion in December 1984. At the time, chess was only going to be of interest to the bearded and the bespectacled, yet the QL version deserves special mention because its slick presentation pointed to what was possible on the machine. On boot up the game displayed the board and playing pieces in a typical plan view, just like Psion's earlier versions for the ZX81 and Spectrum, but by hitting a key you could switch to an impressive '3D' view, where the chunky pieces slid gracefully around the board. The sprite movement was fluid and flicker-free, and this boded well for Psion's second QL game, a conversion of its popular Spectrum tennis title *Match Point*.

Match Point was famously fast on the Speccy, but the QL version was even quicker. The graphics were more detailed too, with multicoloured player sprites stepping in for the Spectrum's featureless silhouettes. The smooth sprite movement and impressive level of detail was possible because Psion opted to use the QL's four-colour mode for *QL Chess* and *Match Point* instead of the more common – for gaming, at least – eight-colour mode. The chief benefit of using four-colour mode was that the full resolution of 512x256 could be displayed, whereas eight-colour mode was restricted to 256x256. So the first job for any programmer was to weigh up the benefits of more detail against more colours. Most chose the latter.

The UK's biggest software labels showed no signs of supporting the QL and this allowed cheeky opportunists to release their own takes on popular titles. Early examples included *EVA*, a ropey *Jetpac* clone from Westway; and Microdeal's *Lands Of Havoc*, a vast, vaguely interesting *Sabre Wulf*-style maze game. Microdeal's Cuthbert character also made an appearance in *Cuthbert In Space*, another *Jetpac* rip-off, but the closest the QL got to its own mascot was BJ, star of three platform games beginning with *QL Caverns* and followed by *BJ The Return* and *BJ In 3D Land*.

Rather unsurprisingly, the vast majority of the QL games were arcade clones. Just for starters you had *Zapper* (*Galaxian*) *Hopper* (*Frogger*), *Knight Flight* (*Joust*), *QL Meteor Storm* (*Asteroids*), *QL Jabber* (*Centipede*) and *Hyperdrive* (*Pole Position*). The quality of these wannabes was generally pretty good, with the standout effort being *Spook*, a faithful *Pac-Man* clone from Damon Chaplin. Damon went on to release a further four arcade games for the QL between 1987 and 1991 – *Deathstrike*, *Assault And Battery*, *Speedfreaks* and *Pudge* – and each one is a superb showcase for the QL's gaming capabilities. You can read an interview with Damon elsewhere in this feature.

One title that deserves a special mention is *Wanderer* from French software house Pyramide. This thoroughly bizarre space adventure featured 3D visuals – as in 'proper' 3D when viewed through coloured specs – and a crazy plot involving card-hustling man-cats – how very French! Yet it's notable because it demonstrates how deftly the QL could display vector-style graphics. Basically, when it came to



» Beyond the QL… Rick Dickinson's prototype design for the QL Plus, with built-in wafer drive and accompanying wafer stack. The design never progressed beyond this model.

INSTANT EXPERT

The Quantum Leap was known as the ZX83 during development. This was referenced in the names of its two custom chips: the ZX8301 and ZX8302.

It was the first mass-market computer to use a Motorola 68000-family processor, beating the Apple Macintosh to launch by just 12 days.

The first machines off the production line had just 32KB of ROM, which wasn't large enough to store all of the QL's operating software. As a quick workaround, an additional 16KB dongle, affectionately known as the 'kludge', was plugged in to the ROM port.

Using memory upgrades it was possible to boost the QL's RAM to 640KB. A third-party device known as the Trump Card later increased this further to 896KB.

The keyboard and case design were the work of Rick Dickinson, who designed all of Sinclair's computers. The subsequent Spectrum+ and 128 would go on to adopt the same styling.

Despite having more keys than the Spectrum, the QL did not have a dedicated 'delete' key. To remove characters you had to hold Ctrl and press the left and right cursor keys.

The QL was named 'Microcomputer of the Year' at the 1985 British Microcomputer Awards. Sir Clive was on hand to receive the trophy and received a standing ovation.

The QL's commercial life ended in April 1986 when Sinclair's computing arm was sold to Amstrad and the bearded one chose to axe the machine.

Linux creator Linus Torvalds owned a QL and originally learnt to program on it in his youth.

Legend has it that software developers received early QLs with power packs that were not properly earthed – with hilarious, often hair-raising consequences.

COMMUNITY THE BEST QL RESOURCES ON THE WEB

RWAP Software
www.rwapsoftware.co.uk

Rich Mellor of RWAP Software has been supporting the QL since 1987 and his site should be your first port of call for information about QL software and hardware. Rich also has lots of items for sale and offers a repair service for faulty machines.



Dilwyn Jones Sinclair QL Pages
www.dilwyn.me.uk

Dilwyn's site is perhaps the most regularly updated QL resource and is definitely worth bookmarking. There's a wealth of software available to freely download, including games, plus a vast library of QL-related documentation and information.



QUANTA
www.quanta.org.uk

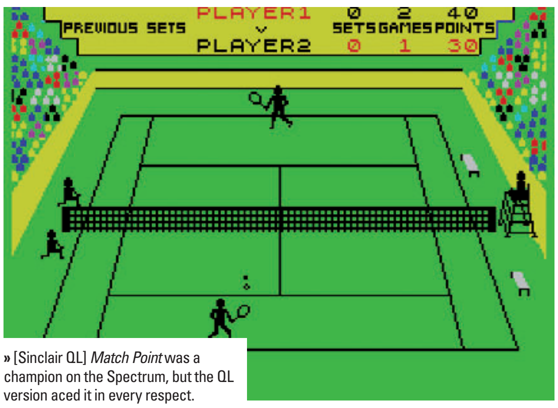
The independent QL user group QUANTA (The QL Users and Tinkerers Association) was formed prior to the machine's launch and is still going strong today with regular meetings and workshops organised around the UK. The group also publishes a bi-monthly magazine for its members.



Q-emuLator Homepage
terdina.net/ql/q-emulator.html

There are several QL emulators available, but if you're looking to run QL games on a PC or Mac then you should opt for Q-emuLator. The full version is shareware, but the free trial includes everything you need to run the vast majority of games. Visit the site for downloads and support.





» [Sinclair QL] *Match Point* was a champion on the Spectrum, but the QL version aced it in every respect.



» Eidersoft published some decent QL software, including Damon Chaplin's first game, *Spook*, and the second and third *BJ* games.

calculating the co-ordinates of wireframe 3D objects, the 68008 could eat 8-bit processors for breakfast. *Wanderer* was certainly no *Elite*, but it clearly signalled that Bell and Braben's masterpiece would have worked extremely well on the QL. In fact, *Elite* just might have been QL-bound at one point, as publisher Firebird announced in January 1986 that it would release software for the machine with an update of the classic budget game *Booty* as its debut title. *Booty* never appeared, however, and with that any prospects of QL *Elite* were presumably condemned to Witch Space.

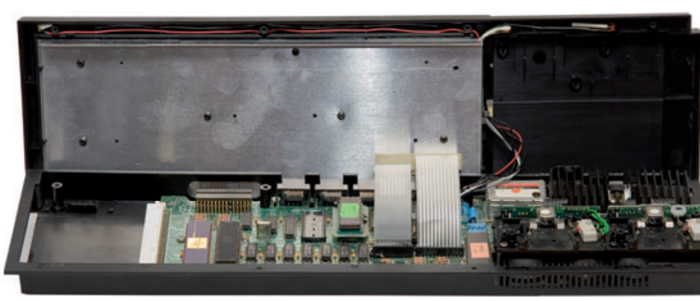
So the QL may have missed out on *Elite*, but it did play host to another classic title from fledging software house Magnetic Scrolls. *The Pawn*, surely one of the finest text adventures ever written, made a low-key, text-only debut on the QL in December 1985 as *QL Pawn* before going on to find great critical and commercial success on the Atari ST, Commodore Amiga and other platforms. Rather tellingly, the follow-up, *The Guild Of Thieves*, was denied a QL release as Magnetic Scrolls focused on more profitable platforms.

Such is the popularity of *The Pawn* that the QL version fetches £30-40 when the occasional complete copy surfaces on eBay. This high price isn't just because of collectors wanting to own a piece of adventure gaming history: if you want to play *QL Pawn*, the only way is with an original copy. Due to clever copy protection methods included on the original release, which have yet to be cracked, there is no digital version available to use on a QL emulator. Thankfully, working dumps of many other games are available, but the problem then is that there's no repository of commercial QL software anywhere on the web. You can't just nip online and download a few games and fire them up under emulation. This is mainly due to the fact that those who have dumped the games and made them compatible with emulators do not wish to run the risk of distributing commercial titles, which are still copyrighted to the original publishers or authors. So, we're afraid the original hardware and software route is currently the only way to go.

That may sound off-putting if you've grown accustomed to using emulators to satisfy those pangs of retro gaming curiosity, but if you're a collector you'll know how rewarding it can be to get your hands on old kit. A quick check on eBay reveals that there are always three or four QLs for sale at any one time, ranging from £40-50 loose to £100+ boxed. And if your QL develops a faulty keyboard (likely) or dodgy microdrive (highly likely), there's plenty of support out there to help you get it fixed (see the 'Community' boxout). Games turn up for sale less often, but they're certainly not uncommon and most titles – *QL Pawn* aside – can be picked up for only a few pounds each. So if you're a Sinclair enthusiast looking to kick-start a QL collection, turn the page to discover ten shining souvenirs of the QL's little-known gaming legacy.

Special thanks to Rich Mellor of RWAP Software (**www.rwapsoftware.co.uk**) for his help and generous assistance.

» Under the hood: the empty space on the left was an expansion bay for housing additional memory and peripherals.

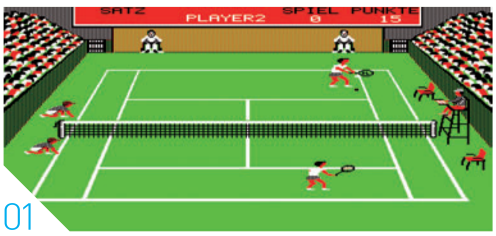




PERFECT TEN GAMES

THE QL WAS NOT HOME TO A LARGE LIBRARY, BUT THERE'S ENOUGH QUALITY TO MAKE CHOOSING TEN OF THE BEST A TRICKY TASK. THE FOLLOWING TITLES ALL SHOWCASE ITS GAMING CAPABILITIES TO SOME DEGREE, BUT ABOVE ALL THEY'RE AN ABSOLUTE BLAST TO PLAY. IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER…





01

MATCH POINT

» **RELEASE:** 1985
» **PUBLISHER:** SINCLAIR RESEARCH
» **CREATOR:** PSION
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** QL CHESS

01 **Such was the** QL's low profile when it came to games, if you walked into a high-street chain store in 1985 looking to buy software, chances are you'd find no more than a couple of Sinclair-published games: *QL Chess* and *Match Point*. Luckily, both were fine titles, with *Match Point* standing out as probably the best game ever released for the machine. Great graphics and super-fast gameplay saw this power past other versions without breaking a sweat. If anything, it was perhaps too fast on the higher difficulty settings, making the use of a joystick essential. And no, you wouldn't find one of those for your QL in WH Smith or Boots either…

KARATE

» **RELEASE:** 1986
» **PUBLISHER:** EIDERSOFT
» **CREATOR:** POINT BLANK
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** N/A

02 **If a game** was a huge hit on other platforms, you could pretty much guarantee that an unofficial version would land on the QL at some point. And so here we have *Way Of The Exploding Fist*, complete with all the moves lifted straight from the Melbourne House masterpiece. But it's hard to criticise blatant copies when they're done with such aplomb. The use of the high-resolution four-colour mode allowed for detailed visuals and precise collision detection, and the all-important speed of the scrapping was sixth dan stuff. The only thing missing was a two-player versus mode, although on later stages you could face off against a couple of fighters.





02

JUNGLE EDDI

» **RELEASE:** 1986
» **PUBLISHER:** GRAFSOFT
» **CREATOR:** STEFAN KUHNE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** THE LOST PHARAOH

03 **Clones of Ultimate** games were rife on the QL, and programmer Stefan Kuhne was one of the chief culprits. His earlier title *The Lost Pharaoh* borrowed wholesale from *Sabre Wulf*, while *Jungle Eddi* was his take on *Underwurlde*. The setting may have shifted from dark caverns to dense jungle, but the way your character leapt around the screen was drawn directly from Sabreman's second adventure. It was a lot of fun and made you wonder why Stefan didn't attempt a *Knight Lore* clone next. It also made you speculate what the Stampers themselves would have come up with if they'd supported the QL.

BJ IN 3D LAND

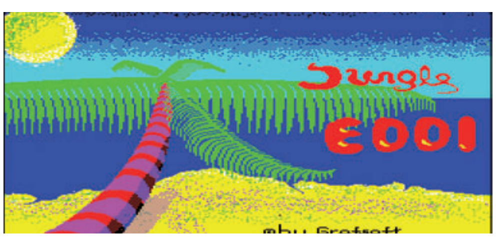
» **RELEASE:** 1986
» **PUBLISHER:** EIDERSOFT
» **CREATOR:** JANKO MRSIC-FLOGEL
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** QL CAVERN

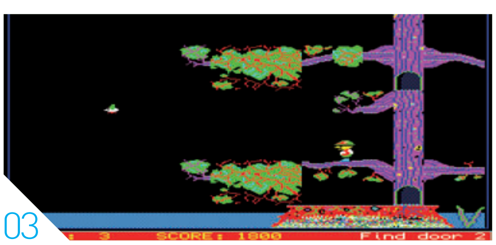
04 **The brilliantly named** Janko Mrsic-Flogel achieved some press on the publication of his first game, *QL Cavern*, on account of him being just 16 years old at the time. He went on to become one of the machine's most prolific programmers and this second sequel to *QL Cavern* is his best. Unlike the previous two games in the series, *BJ In 3D Land* swapped the 2D approach for an isometric viewpoint and gameplay that was similar in style to Atari's *Crystal Castles*. It was also much more forgiving than the earlier *BJ* games in that you had an energy bar rather than a meagre and dwindling supply of lives.

QL QUBOIDS

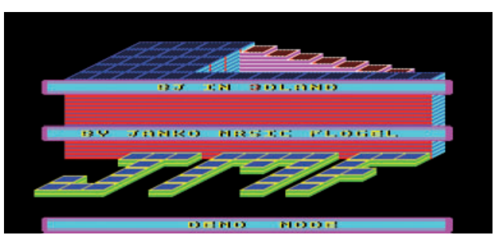
» **RELEASE:** 1986
» **PUBLISHER:** SINCLAIR RESEARCH
» **CREATOR:** AJS
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** N/A

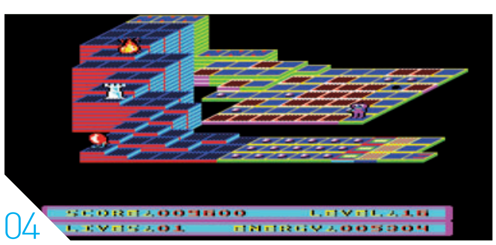
05 ***QL Quboids* was** one of the fresh new games that Sinclair put out as it renewed its efforts to support the QL following its price slash in late 1985. Talking its cue from *Lode Runner*, it was a platform and ladders affair where you had to dig holes to trap various enemies. The pleasingly chunky main character was reminiscent of the astronaut from Odin's *Yesod* games and sprite movement was fast and smooth. The only downside was that the game suffered from that peculiar Eighties ailment 'ladderitis', where your character would stubbornly refuse to budge from the ladder unless he was lined up perfectly with the platform. Damn ladderitis…





03





04



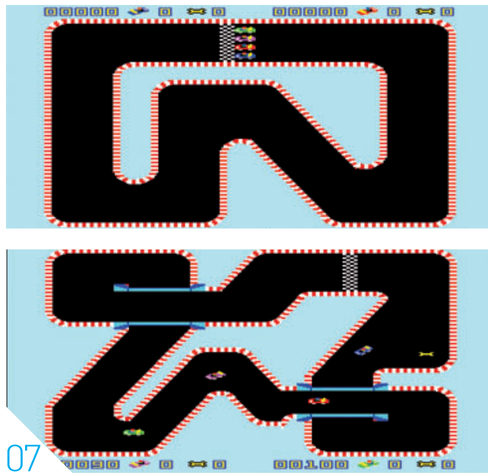


05





06



07



08

DEATHSTRIKE

» **RELEASE:** 1987
» **PUBLISHER:** TALENT COMPUTER SYSTEMS
» **CREATOR:** DAMON CHAPLIN
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SPOOK

06 **It was a** long time coming, and sceptics said it wasn't possible, but *Deathstrike* was the first game to successfully implement full-screen scrolling on the QL. Okay, so the game in question was an unashamed *Scramble* clone, but it was a playable and faithful one, and certainly up to the standard of the arcade original. Navigating your ship through some of the tighter caverns was cruelly difficult, but the desire to push on and see the next stage ensured that you'd try again. Fans of vertical shooters would do well to check out another of Damon's games: the brilliant *Assault And Battery*.

SPEEDFREAKS

» **RELEASE:** 1989
» **PUBLISHER:** KAOS SOFTWARE
» **CREATOR:** DAMON CHAPLIN
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ASSAULT AND BATTERY

07 ***Spook* was great** and *Deathstrike* was even better, but *Speedfreaks* was Damon's crowning achievement. This utterly fantastic *Super Sprint* clone featured eight challenging tracks and support for up to three players. With or without multiplayer, it was easily the most fun arcade game available for the QL. The cars were small but slickly animated and the controls were nice and tight. It was also one of the few games to make decent use of sound, even if the rumbling of the cars' engines sounded vaguely flatulent. This is a great little game that's still as playable now as when first released.

PUDGE

» **RELEASE:** 1991
» **PUBLISHER:** KAOS SOFTWARE
» **CREATOR:** DAMON CHAPLIN
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** DEATHSTRIKE

08 **Another Damon Chaplin** game in the top ten? That may seem slightly blinkered, but not if you spent a few minutes in the company of *Pudge*. Rather than a straightforward clone, *Pudge* takes a bit of *Boulder Dash*, stirs in some *Solomon's Key*, and cooks the whole thing up to create a tasty slice of puzzle pie. On each screen you had to first surround a ticking bomb with boulders, preventing it from exploding, then gather up the radioactive barrels and dispose of them. It's a real shame *Pudge* arrived so late in the day that only the QL's most stalwart supporters will have ever played it.



09

MORTVILLE MANOR

» **RELEASE:** 1986
» **PUBLISHER:** PYRAMIDE
» **CREATOR:** KYILKHOR CREATION
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** MAUPITI ISLAND

09 **You may be** familiar with this sumptuous adventure game from French publisher Pyramide, as it was also released on the PC, ST and Amiga. It made its debut on the QL, however, and while the original may not pack the visual clout of the later versions and is comparatively sluggish – you have to watch as each location image is painstakingly drawn on screen – it's still a very playable piece of interactive fiction. The game saw you exploring the creepy old dwelling of the title, finding objects and speaking to people in a bid to uncover a killer. All in all, it was a welcome change of pace from the QL's many arcade-style games.

QL PAWN

» **RELEASE:** 1985
» **PUBLISHER:** SINCLAIR RESEARCH
» **CREATOR:** MAGNETIC SCROLLS
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** THE GUILD OF THIEVES

10 **With the QL** having a wide display and being able to drag data quickly off microdrive cartridges, it was ideally suited to hosting text adventures. It was strange, then, that only a handful of titles were ever released for the machine. Still, it wouldn't be right to grumble when an adventure as groundbreaking as *The Pawn* was one of those available. If you're a fan of the genre then the game needs no introduction, and if you don't care for boring old text adventures, *The Pawn* might just change your mind. The QL version lacked the stunning location graphics of the later releases, but that shouldn't detract from what is a first-class adventure and a true QL original.



10



RETRO GAMER DIGS UP THE FILES OF THE CLASSIC COMPANIES OF OLD

Hudson Soft – Part 1

One of Japan's most respected videogame firms and the first company to pledge support for Nintendo's 8-bit dream, Hudson Soft has a rich and varied history. Join Damien McFerran as he takes a look back at the early days of this famous gaming brand

It's surprising just how many of the videogaming world's most famous firms actually started out in completely unrelated industries. For example, Commodore was initially established to repair typewriters, Nintendo originally created playing cards, and Coleco started out producing leather for shoes. Japanese veteran Hudson Soft is another company with unusual origins. Before it stepped into the realm of interactive entertainment, the firm specialised in art photographs, telecommunication devices and radios transmitters.

Founded in 1973 by brothers Yuji and Hiroshi Kudo while they were still in college, Hudson made a modest income, but its penchant for modern technology eventually drew it into far more interesting areas of business. "When Yuji Kudo visited the US to market his communication tools, he saw personal computers on sale for the first time," recalls Toshiyuki Takahashi, Hudson's famous PR man, also known to Hudson fans as Takahashi Meijin (which means 'master' or 'famous' Takahashi). "He saw a huge potential in these machines and knew that this kind of technology would be utilised around the globe in the near future, so he brought one home to Japan and started to become deeply involved in programming.

At the same time in Japan, NEC launched the first one-board microcomputer, followed by MZ-80 series from Sharp. Back then, when someone mentioned the word 'program' it meant they were inputting the codes for computer programs written in magazines and as a result typing mistakes became a problem. Therefore, to make that process faster, Hudson put the programs into cassette tapes and started to sell them. This became a phenomenal hit, which started the software sales business." This simplistic idea marked a turning point in the fortunes of the company, and Hudson left behind the old radios of the past and threw itself into the emerging world of software publishing.

Sharp's aforementioned computer platform was the main focus of Hudson's attention at the time, and the company's work rate was prolific. "We launched as many as 20 titles a month," explains Takahashi. "Early programs featured videogames mainly. Basically, they were the programs using BASIC and machine languages." However, while selling computer programs may have generated quite a profit for the time, Hudson's next venture turned the company into one of

INSTANT EXPERT

The company name was inspired by a train that used to pass by the home of the founding brothers

When the Kudos started out, they had ¥500,000 capital and sold telecommunication devices and art photographs

The bee logo was inspired by the island of Hokkaido's radio identification number. In Japanese, the word for the number eight is 'hachi', which is also phonetically the word for 'bee'

Hudson was the first company to sell games for personal computers and the first third party to sign up to Nintendo's Famicom console

Bomberman was released in the West in 1984 under the title *Eric And The Floaters* (UK) and *Don Pepe Y Los Globos* (Spain)

Between them, *Bomberman* and *Momotaro Dentetsu*, two of Hudson's biggest franchises, have sold over 10 million copies worldwide

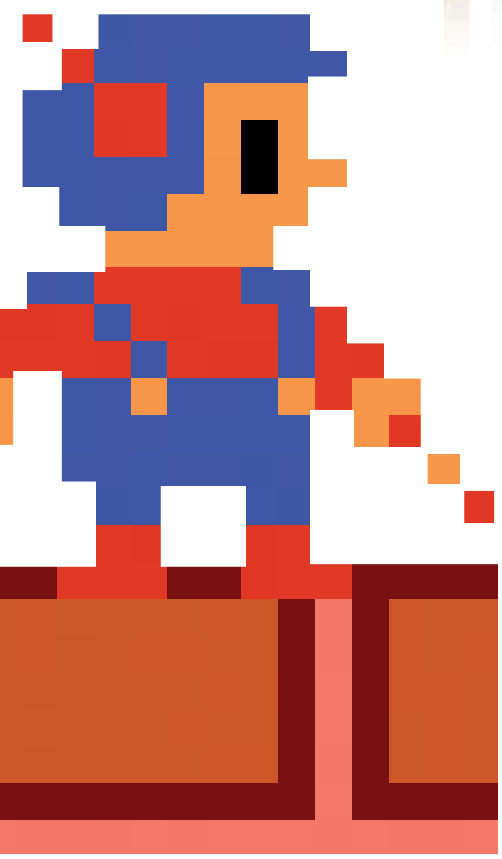
Hudson Soft employee Toshiyuki Takahashi could hammer a fire button 16 times in one second. However, recent tests have shown that age is catching up with him and he can only manage 12 times a second. Still pretty impressive

The plot of the original *Bomberman* involved a robot working in a bomb factory, who wishes to escape his boring job and become human



BOMBERMAN





the most influential Japanese software houses of the Eighties.

Hudson And Nintendo

"While developing games for the Sharp MZ-80 series, we were also creating a development language called Hu-BASIC," remembers Takahashi. "Some time later, Hudson created the operating system for the Sharp X-1." Hudson's expertise with programming caught the eye of another Japanese hardware manufacturer that had recently launched its own console.

That company was Nintendo and the console was the Famicom, which went on to become the Nintendo Entertainment System when released in the West.

"In 1983 Nintendo requested that we create a programming language called Family BASIC," Takahashi reveals. "This request came as a result of the fact that Hudson was the only software house that owned its own OS." Hudson's involvement with Nintendo marked the beginning of a new chapter for the firm. "Hiroshi Kudo started learning about the Famicom while Hudson was creating Family Basic," says Takahashi. "That's how we got interested in the Famicom and joined Nintendo as a third party."

This relationship blossomed and Hudson was tasked with porting several of Nintendo's titles – including *Mario Bros* and *Donkey Kong 3* – to the NEC PC-8801. The company also held the distinction of being the first third party to sign up to develop for Nintendo's new 8-bit console. It might seem like a no-brainer with hindsight, but it's important to remember that back in the early-Eighties the videogame industry was still reeling from the crash caused by the implosion of Atari's 2600 hardware. "The Famicom started on the back of Atari's collapse and every software company was writing it off, saying that it was never going to work," explains John Lee, former

> **"Famicom started on the back of Atari's collapse and every software company was writing it off"**
>
> JOHN LEE, EX-VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES AND MARKETING, HUDSON ENTERTAINMENT

BY THE NUMBERS

There have been **66** Bomberman games on various formats, not including spin-offs

62 games were released for the ill-fated PC-FX system

The 1985 Hudson Caravan took place in **60** venues across Japan

Konami increased its holding of Hudson stock in 2005 with the purchase of **3 million** shares

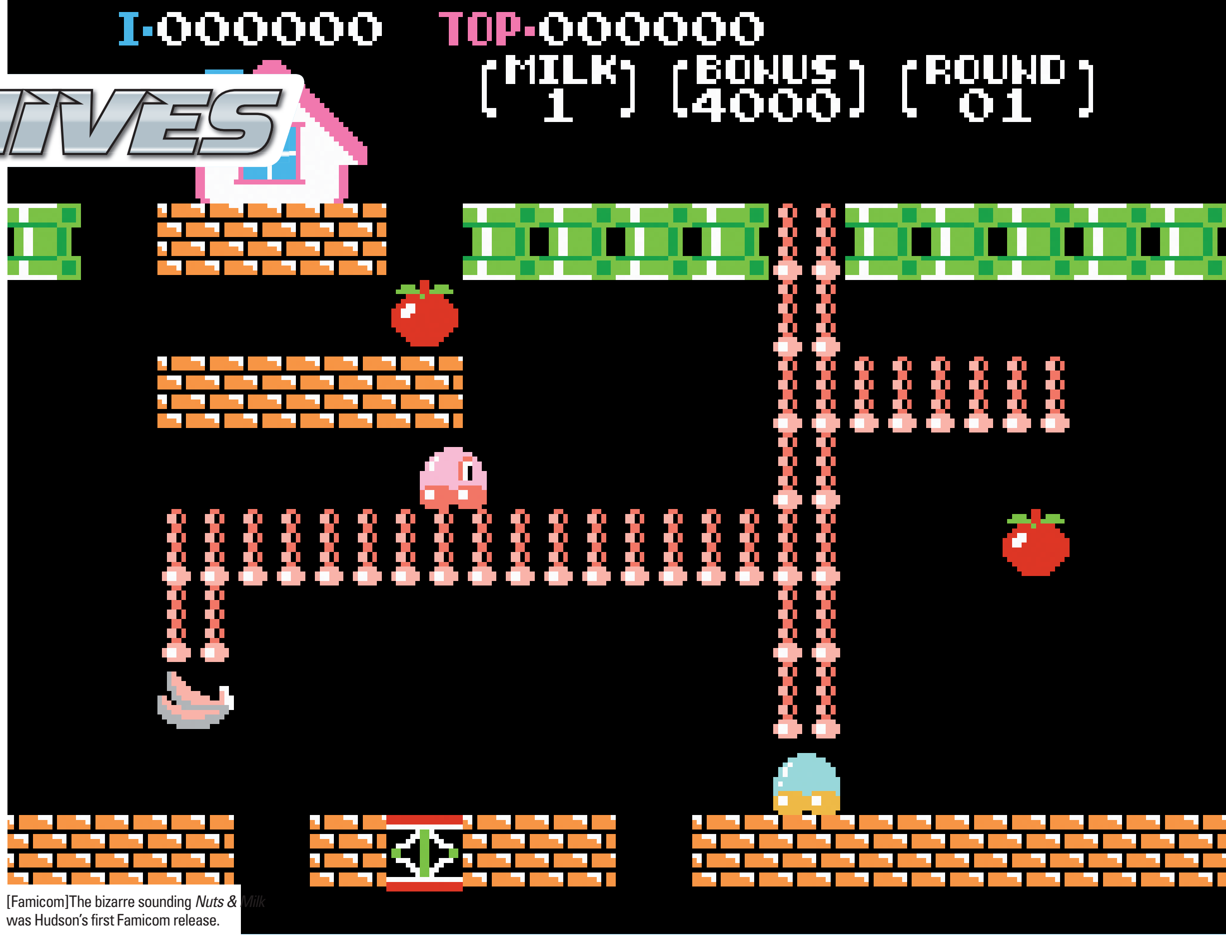
Japanese gamers voted PC-Engine title *Tengai Makyou II: Manjimaru* the **12th** best game ever

Hi-Ten Bomberman allowed **10** people to play at once

5 players could hop into a game of *Super Bomberman 5* – the most available on SNES at the time

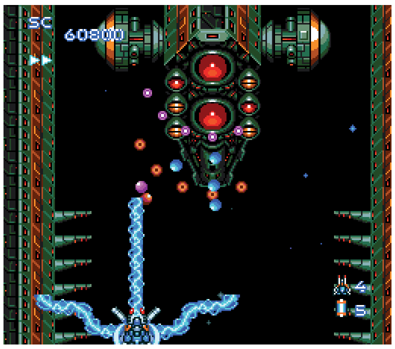
1.2 million units of Famicom *Lode Runner* were sold after its release

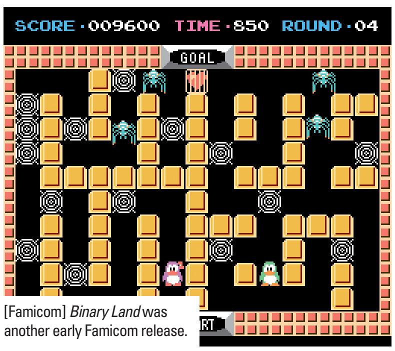
The TurboGrafx-16 sold **2.5** million units in the United States



[Famicom]The bizarre sounding *Nuts & Milk* was Hudson's first Famicom release.

[PC Engine] The superlative *Gunhed* – produced alongside Compile – proved how capable the developer was with shooters.





[Famicom] *Binary Land* was another early Famicom release.

> **"The original 2D Bomberman works because it is simple and elegant"** JOHN LEE, HUDSON ENTERTAINMENT

vice president of sales and marketing for Hudson's American division, Hudson Entertainment. "But Yuji Kudo saw the Famicom and thought 'this is genius, this is beautiful, this is going to be huge'. Hudson knew that this was going to be a hit."

Naturally, for such a move to be successful Hudson needed to produce software that was good enough to stand out from Nintendo's own first-party output. The company decided to port Douglas E Smith's 1983 computer classic *Lode Runner* to the machine, partly because the arcade hits of the era were difficult to shoehorn into Famicom's humble technology. "Most games sold in Japan were developed by arcade makers themselves," explains Takahashi. "These games were too large to be put into the ROM of the Famicom, so we picked some computer games and discussed which would be better suited for the machine. We all agreed that *Lode Runner* would be the best." The title was also attractive because it had a proven track record and therefore offered the least risk to the fledgling publisher. "Back then *Lode Runner* was a big hit across Japan on personal computers," says Takahashi. "This was because of its action-based nature, with a puzzle element included. Hudson was sure that this would be accepted by all gamers in Japan – even by kids who owned Famicoms."



16-Shot Takahashi's ability to hit a fire button 16 time a second came in handy when playing early Hudson titles like *Super Star Soldier.*

This surety of success was vital to Hudson at this delicate stage. "There was no margin for error so a certain amount of guaranteed sales were estimated with *Lode Runner,*" reveals Takahashi. "We did create other games as a backup plan, but the number in sales differed phenomenally mainly due to the fact that most promotional activities were focused on *Lode Runner.*" However, despite Hudson's best efforts, the game almost never saw the light of day. "When Douglas E Smith saw it for the first time, he said 'this is not *Lode Runner*'," says Takahashi. "The original game utilised small characters, which we thought our game users – children – would not find attractive. Therefore, we decided to make the characters bigger, which inevitably made the maze wider and required a side-scrolling screen. However, I understand that Mr Smith finally agreed and was satisfied with our game style after thorough discussion."

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Toshiyuki Takahashi — John Lee

Toshiyuki Takahashi

The man who provided the inspiration for the character of Master Higgins is still employed by Hudson in Japan. He is heavily involved with marketing the company's titles and even writes his own blog on Hudson's Japanese site. Still revered as a gaming legend able to hit a button 16 times in one second, he's even released a gadget called the Shooting Watch, which allows players to see if they can do the same. As Hudson has expanded into the mobile phone and iPhone market, Takahashi has become heavily involved with promoting such ventures in Japan.

John Lee

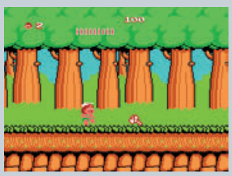
The very definition of an industry veteran, Lee has worked at Sega, Konami, THQ, Bethesda and Eidos, where he helped launch brands such as *Star Wars, Tomb Raider, The Elder Scrolls* and *WWE*. As well as being particularly marketing-savvy, he's also a keen gamer and proudly states that he can complete *Super Mario Bros* in seven and a half minutes. Lee was instrumental in securing Hudson's recent return to the US market, but his next project, Bardo Entertainment, will be his most challenging yet.

SIX OF THE BEST

Bomberman (PC-Engine)
While the NES version is often cited as a fan favourite, PC-Engine *Bomberman* revealed how addictive the concept could be. Introducing the important multiplayer mode, thanks to the multitap adaptor, four players could indulge in a bomb-hurling deathmatch. "When the game was ported to PC-Engine, you could say this was the beginning of the *Bomberman* that you see now," states Takahashi.



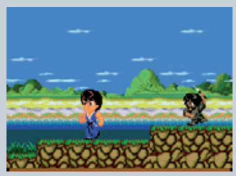
Adventure Island (NES)
Based on Sega's ultra-successful arcade machine *Wonder Boy* (programmed by Escape, later known as Westone), *Adventure Island* featured the same brilliant gameplay, but had a different lead character, Master Higgins. This baseball-cap-wearing cave boy was in turn based on Toshiyuki Takahashi's alter ego, Master Takahashi, due to the fact that Takahashi was becoming very famous in Japan at the time.



Star Soldier (NES)
Also released on the MSX home computer, this vertical shooter has gone down in history as a great example of the genre. The game contains a high score mode known as Caravan mode, which inspired Hudson's All-Japan Caravan Festival, in which players compete against each other to see who can achieve the best tally. *Star Soldier* owes a debt to Tecmo's *Star Force*, which also saw release on NES.



Jackie Chan's Action Kung Fu (PC-Engine)
Usually, it's advisable to give games that feature famous celebrities a wide berth, but this 2D action platformer, which – as the title suggests – showcases the talents of a certain Mr Chan, is absolutely fantastic fun. The action is tight and enjoyable and the presentation is top-notch. A NES version also saw the light of day and retains the knockabout appeal of the PCE version, but the visuals are markedly inferior.



Super Star Soldier (PC-Engine)
Star Soldier's popularity in Japan ensured that a sequel was inevitable, and with the additional power of the newly released PC-Engine Hudson (along with Inter State and Kaneko) was able to create something truly jaw-dropping. The graphics were stunning, easily rivalling those seen in the latest coin-op hits. The game is available on Virtual Console and represents an essential download.



Challenger (Famicom)
An enhanced version of Spectrum game *Stop The Express*, this Japan-only release expanded the concept by adding more levels, boosting the visual quality and adding an *Indiana Jones*-style plot involving hidden treasures and kidnapped princesses. The game was a huge hit in Japan and has been released on the Japanese Virtual Console, as well as being ported to mobile phones.



Bomber Time

With a mini-drama averted, Hudson found that its optimistic predictions were accurate and *Lode Runner* went on to sell 1.2 million copies. However, it was Hudson's next big hit that proved more significant. Whereas *Lode Runner* was a Western game tailored for a Japanese audience, *Bomberman* proved a true classic of Far-Eastern design.

The Famicom version of the game was released in 1984 and quite literally had an incendiary effect on the Japanese videogame market. However, rather than being a completely original release, *Bomberman* was in fact inspired by one of Hudson's earlier computer-based efforts. "*Bomberman* is based on the game known as *Bakudan Otoko*, which was developed for the Sharp X-1," explains Takahashi. "One of our programmers, Mr Tanaka, created this game in which the main character – a man with a bowler hat – wiped out balloon-shaped ghosts. The main character used ticking time bombs to destroy enemy characters, just like in *Bomberman*. The game was actually sold in Western territories on the ZX Spectrum as *Eric And The Floaters*."

Hudson programmer Shinichi Nakamoto took this original concept and skilfully updated it for the Famicom market, laying down the template that the series has stuck to so slavishly for the past few decades. "The game itself had simple, easy, fun gameplay," gushes Lee. "To this day it retains the same qualities. Any time you try to do *Bomberman* in 3D it never quite works because of the simplicity and elegance of the original. That's what makes it so great – you have that same game selling well for over 20 years and it doesn't need to change. It's the ultimate game compliment." It's worth noting, however, that this version was a resolutely single-player affair and that the series wouldn't be propelled into stratospheric levels of popularity until multiplayer options were added to subsequent versions. But we're getting ahead of ourselves.

START YOUR PC-ENGINES

To many, the PC-Engine remains one of Hudson's most important ventures. Produced in conjunction with NEC, this 8-bit machine boasted a 16-bit graphics chip (designed by Hudson itself) and upon its release in 1987, made Nintendo's dominant Famicom technically obsolete. It would prove to be a massive success in its native Japan – where it challenged Nintendo and kept Sega's Mega Drive in third place – but failed to translate the success in the US, where it was rebranded as the TurboGrafx-16. Hudson was also responsible for creating the unique HuCard storage system, which allowed the company to produce software on thin, credit card-style carts, adding further to the appeal of this dainty machine. Hudson and NEC would go on to work on numerous subsequent hardware projects together, including the Super Grafx, PC-Engine GT, Duo and PC-FX.



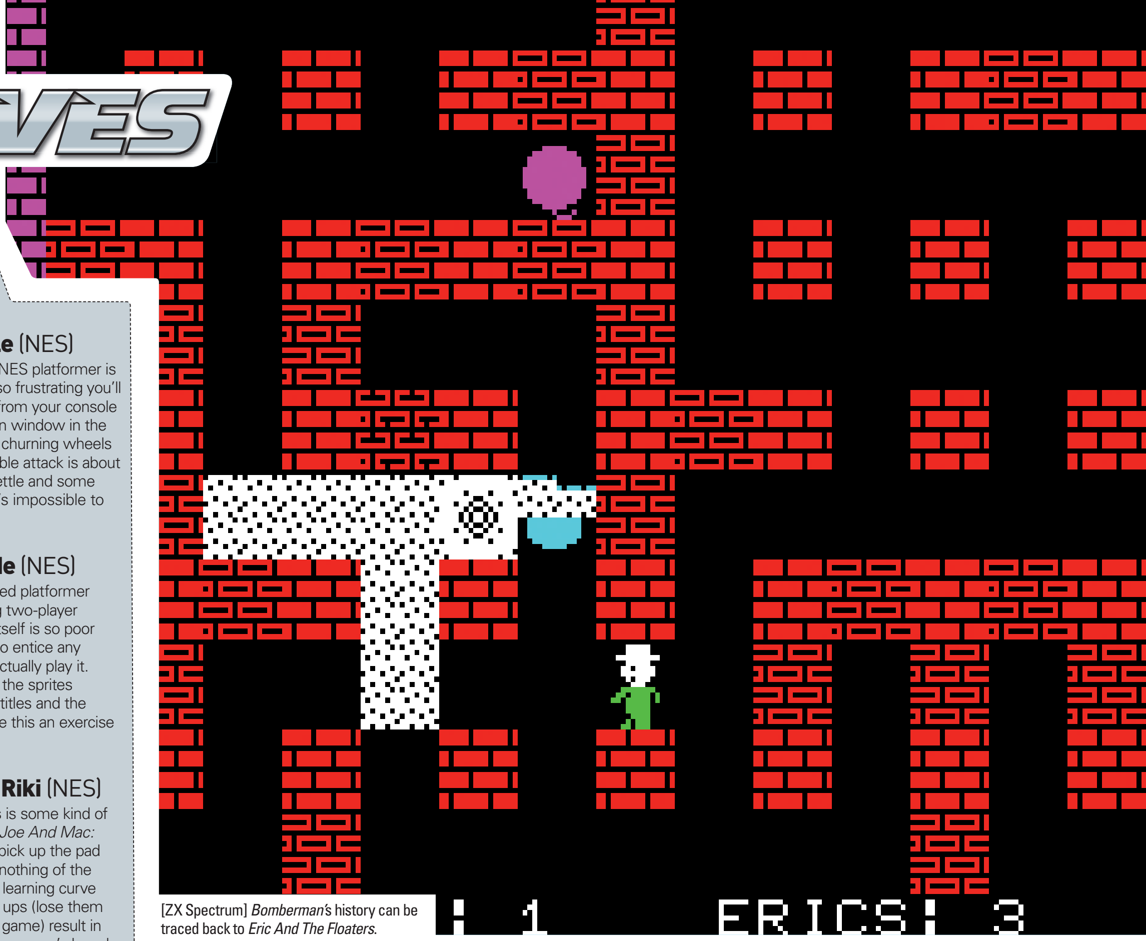
16-Shot Takahashi

It was around this time that Takahashi started to become something of a celebrity among Hudson fans. "In 1985 the Hudson Game Caravan was held in which I toured around the southern region of Japan as South-Caravan Chief," he explains. "The event was held to help children enjoy Hudson games with lots of friends across Japan. By setting a goal of choosing the best gamer in Japan, we successfully got children involved in the event with high enthusiasm. Before the game tournament took place, I gave game demonstrations in front of children to make the Caravan more exciting. I believe that was when I became known as 16-Shot."

This somewhat unusual nickname came about thanks to Takahashi's ability to pummel the fire button of a joypad 16 times in one second – a talent that served him well with Hudson's early shooters, such as *Star Soldier*. Such was Takahashi's fame that he eventually ended up as the lead character in Hudson's next big hit, *Adventure Island*, which was essentially a port of the 1986 Sega coin-op hit *Wonder Boy*. Although the arcade game is credited to Sega, the company only owned the rights to the characters. The code itself remained the property of developer Escape (better known as Westone). This meant Escape was free to work with Hudson on porting the popular title to NES, albeit with different character sprites. "When we were developing *Adventure Island*, I visited the development team with Hiroshi Kudo, who was vice president at this stage,"

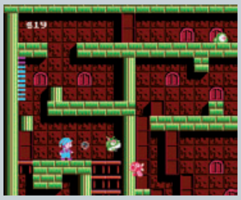


FROM THE ARCHIVES

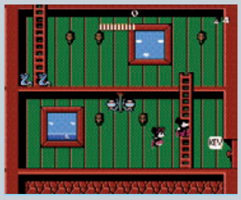


[ZX Spectrum] *Bomberman's* history can be traced back to *Eric And The Floaters.*

SIX TO MISS



Milon's Secret Castle (NES)
Despite its cult following, this NES platformer is dull, drab in visual terms, and so frustrating you'll want to wrench the cartridge from your console and hurl it out the nearest open window in the hope that it lands beneath the churning wheels of a passing HGV. Milon's bubble attack is about as much use as a chocolate kettle and some of the puzzles are so obtuse it's impossible to progress without a guide.



Mickey Mousecapade (NES)
Although this Capcom-published platformer is unique for its era for offering two-player simultaneous play, the game itself is so poor that it's unlikely you'll be able to entice any of your friends or relatives to actually play it. The levels are samey, most of the sprites are ripped from other Hudson titles and the hopelessly loose controls make this an exercise in aggravation.



Adventures Of Dino Riki (NES)
Initially, you might assume this is some kind of vertical-scrolling forerunner to *Joe And Mac: Caveman Ninja*, but once you pick up the pad it soon dawns on you that it's nothing of the sort. Terrible graphics, a steep learning curve and an over-reliance on power ups (lose them and you may as well reset the game) result in a title so poor it's not surprising no one's heard of it. And there are hardly any dinosaurs in it.



Princess Tomato In The Salad Kingdom (NES)
Despite the stupid title, there's a lot of love for *Princess Tomato* among the NES faithful. After all, it was one of the first RPG-style titles for the console and it arrived at a time when this kind of adventure game was popular. Sadly, the puzzles display a complete disregard for any kind of logic, which isn't a shock when you consider the hero is a cucumber



Keith Courage In Alpha Zones (TG-16)
Hudson took the iffy PC-Engine title *Mashin Eiy den Wataru* and renamed the main character Keith. The gameplay was essentially the same, which was no good thing as the Japanese original was nothing to write home about. *Keith Courage* was a pack-in for the TG-16 and the fact it made *Altered Beast* (the Mega Drive's bundle game) look impressive speaks volumes.



Robowarrior (NES)
Known in Japan as *Bomber King*, this top-down action title was intended as a spin-off of the *Bomberman* franchise, and its more mature tone pre-dated the train wreck that was *Bomberman Act:Zero* on 360 by several years. The presentation is pretty decent and the music is way above average for a NES title, but the often-insane difficulty means this is a game for sadomasochists only.

> **"NEC had quite a bit of success in Japan and Hudson was certainly a big part of that"** JOHN LEE, HUDSON ENTERTAINMENT

explains Takahashi. "As I became popular among gamers, Mr Kudo said 'Why don't we use you to replace this Wonder Boy character for *Adventure Island*?' That was the beginning of Master Higgins."

Hudson Hardware

With a few 8-bit successes under its belt, Hudson began to spread its wings and decided to explore the realm of hardware creation. "Since 1984, Hudson had been engaged in developing for the Famicom, but there were few people who could write programs for CPU of the console," recalls Takahashi. "Therefore, at the beginning of 1986 we started developing a chip for a game console that utilised the most popular Z80-series CPU and whose programs could be easily written." Hudson approached various manufacturers with the design. "Hudson is an unusual software company in that it has maintained separate business divisions dealing with software, middleware and hardware," says Lee. "This has allowed it to be of great help to other companies that required such varied fields of expertise. In the late-Eighties Hudson had developed a hardware platform and a media format, as well as development tools to create a gaming environment, but the company wasn't in the hardware-publishing business. So we eventually licensed the technology to NEC and the PC-Engine was born."

It was a match made in heaven, with Hudson providing both knowledge of the

TIMELINE

1973 HUDSON SOFT IS FOUNDED BY BROTHERS YUJI AND HIROSHI KUDO

1975 THE COMPANY MOVES INTO SELLING COMPUTER CODE ON TAPE

1978 HUDSON STARTS WORKING ON GAME PROGRAMS FOR JAPANESE PERSONAL COMPUTERS (THE FIRST COMPANY IN THE COUNTRY TO DO SO)

1982 TOKYO OFFICE OPENS IN CHIYODA-KU

1983 NINTENDO APPROACHES HUDSON WITH THE INTENTION OF CREATING A PROGRAMMING TOOL FOR ITS FAMICOM CONSOLE. *BOMBERMAN* IS RELEASED ON PERSONAL COMPUTERS

1984 HUDSON'S FIRST FAMICOM TITLE, CALLED *NUTS & MILK*, IS RELEASED. *LODE RUNNER* HITS THE SHELVES IN THE SAME YEAR AND BECOMES A SMASH HIT, EVENTUALLY SELLING 1.2 MILLION COPIES

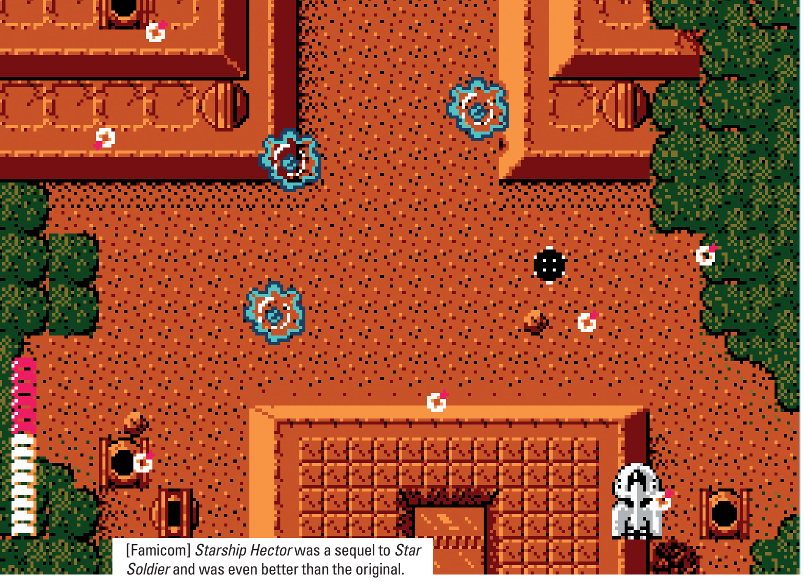
1985 THE FAMICOM VERSION OF *BOMBERMAN* IS RELEASED AND QUICKLY BECOMES A FIRM FAVOURITE. CARAVAN ROAD SHOW MAKES ITS DEBUT

1986 HUDSON BEGINS WORK ON ITS OWN 'C62' CHIPSET DESIGN, WHICH IT HOPES TO SELL TO OTHER COMPANIES

1987 AFTER BEING REJECTED BY NINTENDO, HUDSON ALLIES ITSELF WITH ELECTRONICS GIANT NEC AND RELEASES THE PC-ENGINE CONSOLE

1988 *MOMOTARO DENTETSU* IS PUBLISHED ON FAMICOM. IT GOES ON TO BECOME ONE OF HUDSON'S MOST ENDURING BRANDS – BUT ONLY IN JAPAN

1989 THE TURBOGRAFX-16 IS RELEASED IN THE US



[Famicom] *Starship Hector* was a sequel to *Star Soldier* and was even better than the original.







The annual Hudson Game Caravan was a massive success and helped the company to promote its output.



Hudson has resurrected the Hudson Caravan concept, with Toshiyuki '16-Shot' Takahashi once again at the helm.

industry and its cutting-edge chip design, while manufacturing behemoth NEC brought incredible production might and a reputation second to none. For both parties, such a relationship brought with it incredible benefits. "One of the reasons NEC got into the gaming business was that they wanted to educate young people on the name of NEC, so you grew up having NEC in your lexicon," says Lee. "They wanted to reinforce their warranted image as a top electronics company to a new generation. NEC had quite a bit of success in Japan and Hudson was certainly a very big part of that."

I'm A PC-Engine

The PC-Engine launched in 1987 and quickly carved out a chunk of the Japanese game market for itself. However, going toe-to-toe with the already dominant Famicom console wasn't easy. "There were times when getting support from publishers was difficult," recalls Takahashi. "Therefore, for a certain period of time, we manufactured the game cases and manuals ourselves in order to facilitate the game-launching process." Hudson went to great lengths to secure as much support for the new system as possible, but in the end all it took was one arcade conversion to truly tip the balance and turn the PC-Engine into a runaway success that even managed to outsell the Famicom during its second year on sale.

"As far as Hudson is concerned, the most important factor was *R-Type*," says Takahashi. "A lot of users were quite surprised to see that *R-Type* on PC-Engine was of the same quality as the arcade version." Indeed, this superlative port of Irem's much-loved coin-operated classic made it abundantly clear to the hordes of Famicom-owning gamers out there that a new era was dawning. Nintendo's dominance of the Japanese videogame industry was seriously threatened.

On the other side of the pond, meanwhile the situation was rather different. PC-Engine was redesigned and launched as the TurboGrafx-16, and it struggled to find a foothold in a market that was being carved up by the incumbent NES and the newly released Sega Genesis/Mega Drive. While Sega skilfully adapted its software line-up to include games that would appeal to Western tastes, the TurboGrafx-16 software selection comprised titles that had a distinctly Japanese flavour. Sega also pushed the boat out in terms of marketing spend, and this strategy helped the company push both the NES and TurboGrafx-16 into the shade.

During this period, Hudson's American branch, which was founded in 1988, continued to churn out titles for Nintendo platforms such as NES, Game Boy, and – when it was eventually released – Super NES. The company was in a rather awkward position: it naturally had a vested interest in the commercial performance of the TurboGrafx-16, but the console wasn't in a strong enough position to offer the vital revenue streams that were afforded by Nintendo's platforms. American gamers, therefore, had two choices. They could invest in new and expensive hardware in order to play graphically stunning versions of Hudson hits such as *Bomberman* and *Adventure Island*, or they could simply stick with their existing NES consoles and pick up Hudson's self-programmed conversions of these same titles. To many, it was a no-brainer and the TurboGrafx-16's fortunes suffered as a result. However, the poor performance of the machine in the US did little to slow its meteoric rise in its homeland. For Hudson, the good times were set to continue for some time to come.

Join us next month for part two when we'll be bringing the Hudson story bang up to date.

ON THE RIGHT TRACK

Although many Japanese companies take Western-sounding names in order to increase their appeal in the global market, the American-sounding Hudson actually takes its name from the locomotive that once passed by the childhood home of its founders. "A long time ago, the C62-type locomotive ran on the Hokkaido mainline through the town of Niseko where the Kudo brothers lived," explains Takahashi. "Hiroshi liked the locomotive very much and wanted to make use of it in some way in the future. When he started his own business, he picked it up for his company's name. The locomotive's axle was called the 'Hudson' type." This train went on to become an essential part of the company, as Lee explains: "After Hudson became successful, they brought that train back and have used it as a tourist attraction."





THE MAKING OF...

ROAD RUNNER*





IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** ATARI
- » **DEVELOPER:** ATARI
- » **RELEASED:** 1985
- » **PLATFORM:** ARCADE, AMSTRAD CPC, ATARI 2600, ATARI ST, COMMODORE 64, DOS, NES, ZX SPECTRUM
- » **GENRE:** ARCADE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £500+ FOR A FULLY WORKING CAB; £1+ FOR HOME CONVERSIONS

On the face of it, Atari's *Road Runner* appears a straightforward conversion from one small screen to another. Despite a few quirks, such as its right-to-left direction of play, it's an uncomplicated videogame licence, transplanting the frantic and much-loved cartoon to similarly frantic chase-based gameplay.

You control the eponymous Road Runner (Outsmartus Coyotus); in constant pursuit: Wile E Coyote (Eatius Birdius), a rather inventive example of the breed who, for better or worse, is a massive fan of Acme Corporation contraptions, using them to aid in the capture of his elusive and speedy prey. In the cartoon, Wile E always comes unstuck, but in the videogame you must be on the lookout for the determined canid, along with any birdseed littered among the desert scenery. Miss five piles of the golden foodstuff and the Road Runner faints, proving that extreme exercise really does rapidly burn off those calories and also that getting woozy when a seriously hungry carnivore is nearby is a really bad idea.

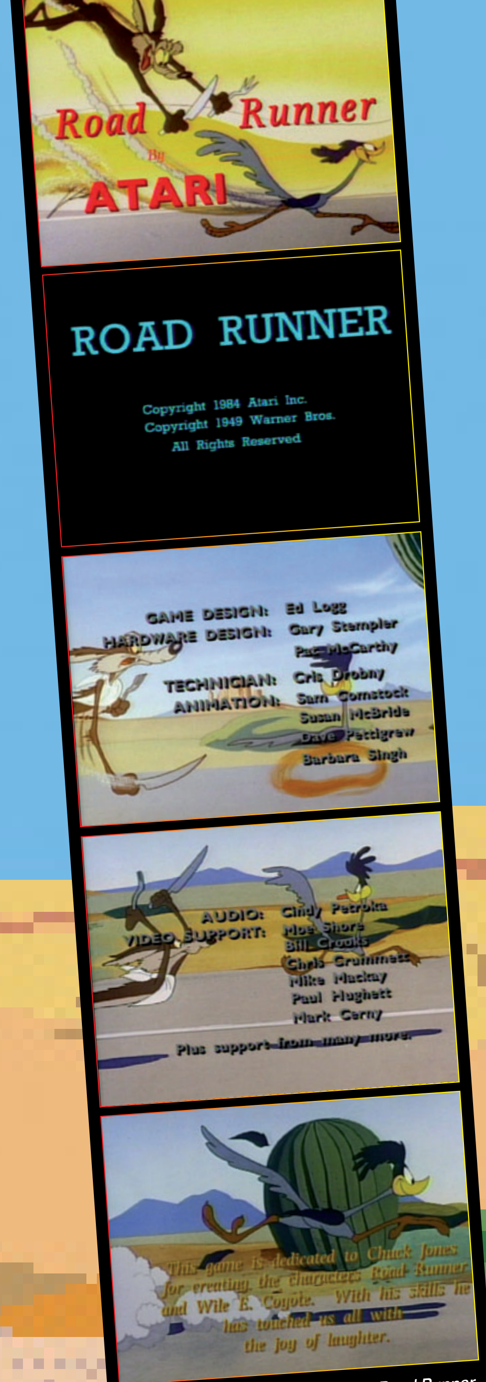
Producer Greg Rivera recalls that with Atari owned by Warner Communications during the early Eighties, Warner Bros properties were fair game for the arcades: "Every month, they'd dump all the DC comics on our desks, and they actively encouraged the possibility of a game based on some Warner Bros title or other."

But it was Ed Logg, who a few years earlier had been largely responsible for the groundbreaking coin-ops *Asteroids* and *Centipede*, who first took the plunge, creating a game based around *Road Runner*: "I was always a classic *Road Runner* cartoon fan when I was growing up, and I said, 'Let's try doing a game.'"

Ed soon found himself in possession of every *Road Runner* cartoon ever made, and had the pleasure of watching them all, noting down the coyote death scenes and the Acme devices featured throughout. "The original idea was to do a Laserdisc game, and to pull off a lot of cartoon snippets as you played," reveals Greg. "If something you had footage for occurred, like a collision, the Laserdisc would play a piece of the cartoon." Ed himself notes that, unsurprisingly, the core gameplay of the videogame was strongly influenced by various aspects of the cartoons: "The levels had various different areas. There's the classic scene with the Road Runner running down the road and Wile E trying different tricks to catch him. His nemesis was stuff like cars, and so the trick was to try and get Wile E run over,

Originally a Laserdisc game until someone at Atari yelled 'That's all, folks!', Road Runner subsequently became a popular System 1 title. Join Craig Grannell as he straps on rocket skates and tries to catch big-game ex-Atari bods Ed Logg, Greg Rivera and Mike Hally to spill the birdseed about their classic creation. Meep meep!





» [Arcade prototype] The original *Road Runner* game has an attract sequence with footage directly lifted from *Road Runner* cartoons.

at which point the game would cut to the cartoon, so you could actually see Wile E getting smashed by a truck or whatever." And while the reasoning behind the curious choice to scroll the game in the opposite direction to almost every other title out there has been lost in the mists of time, Ed reckons that also might have originated in the cartoons: "Certainly, scrolling could have gone in either direction, but that decision could have come from one of the cartoons where Road Runner goes from right to left, because there are cartoons where that happens."

Sadly, although the theory was fine, the reality of dealing with Laserdisc was something else. "Boy, did we have problems," says Ed. "Sam Comstock had a means to put the cartoons on film, and so I just had to get them transferred to Laserdisc, but the quality of the stuff we got back was noisy, with lots of pixelation, which we didn't expect." There were also problems marrying the Laserdisc backgrounds to the player-controlled action: "Unfortunately, when you play back film, there's enough jitter for there to be registration issues, and that was a problem we did not foresee. It was a pain to get the horizontal and vertical registration right… When you got to a cliff, you didn't want pixels to show you were standing on the road when, in fact, you were off the edge of the cliff!"

As if these complications weren't bad enough, the final nail in the coffin of the original version of *Road Runner* was down to the reliability of the technology itself – or rather the lack thereof. "Laserdiscs just weren't intended for coin-op use: they were home systems with the standard number of hours to failure," says Ed. "And there was also a search latency. If you wanted to get off the track and jump somewhere else, you had to be relatively close on the disc, otherwise it'd delay and you'd get a black screen for a while. You had to lay out the disc just right, which is something you'd not normally have to do in a videogame."

Problems became particularly apparent during field-testing, at which point Atari's marketing department started making grumbling noises.

> "The original idea was to do a Laserdisc game, and to pull off a lot of cartoon snippets as you played"

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

FIREFOX
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1983

GAUNTLET
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1985

INDIANA JONES AND THE TEMPLE OF DOOM (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1985



THE MAKING OF... ROAD RUNNER

COYOTE CONTRAPTIONS



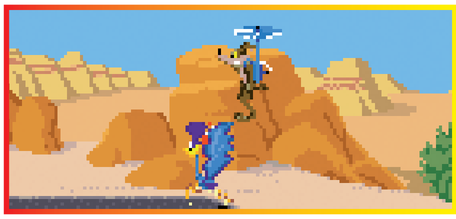
ROCKET SKATES
Get too far ahead of Wile E and he straps on a pair of dashing rocket skates to catch you up. To stop him doing this, merely stay tantalisingly just out of reach.



GIANT FIREWORK
At the start of Level 2's maze, Wile E has the bright idea of sitting astride a giant rocket, which zooms across the screen.



POGO STICK
Strapping a massive spring to his feet makes Wile E bounce all over the shop, but this semi-random movement also makes him hard to avoid.



HELICOPTER BACKPACK
In a last-ditch attempt to grab some lunch, Wile E straps a mini helicopter to his back and bombards the Road Runner with explosives.



GIANT MAGNET
Eat birdseed laced with metal filings and, quick as a flash, Wile E whips out his huge magnet to pull you towards his slavering chops.



» [Arcade prototype] In terms of gameplay, Laserdisc *Road Runner* was very similar to the System 1 game. (pictures courtesy of Mark Alpiger of **classicarcadegaming.com**.)

"When we put it on field test, it was a game that did okay, but not good enough that you could put it into production immediately, and so marketing kept saying, 'do this, try that'," says Ed. "But I'd been in the industry long enough to realise those changes never work."

Taking a 'what you see is what you get' philosophy, Ed finally decided enough was enough when the suggestion came through to scrap the problematic Laserdisc and shift the game to the then-new Atari System 1 hardware. "I said, 'Why don't you go ahead and have someone else take it?' And so that's why Mike Hally ended up with the game," says Ed, who subsequently bowed out of the project to start working on another idea he wanted to do: *Gauntlet*.

Today, just one prototype of the original *Road Runner* is known to exist, and those who've been lucky enough to play it would probably only notice subtle differences to the version that went into full production: the background is pulled from Laserdisc and characters drawn over the top, cartoon cut-scenes pepper play, and the attract sequence includes further clips from the cartoon, in contrast to the rather functional version in the shipped product. All similarity between Ed's Laserdisc version and the System 1 game was entirely intentional, according to Mike Hally, who ended up becoming director of the game's 'reboot': "I really tried to use as much of Ed's team's designs as possible, since Atari had already spent a lot of development money. I looked at the project more like a conversion than a complete redesign."

Mike also elaborates on some of *Road Runner*'s gameplay: "As Ed said, all of the major components for the game originated in the classic cartoon features that we had as reference. The 'seed meter' at the top was then used as a timer of sorts, forcing the Road Runner to collect seed or become weak and be captured." The premise of the entire design, suggests Mike, was designed to always keep the Road Runner moving, while also performing a few required tasks – eating seed, avoiding capture, and keeping away from obstacles like



» [Arcade] Cheekily matching speeds with Wile E, the Road Runner gets himself a 'tongue bonus' by blowing a raspberry at his foe.



» [Arcade] Playing chicken with a mad coyote riding a rocket isn't the best of moves for a tasty Road Runner!



» [Arcade] In case you wondered what the gold heaps on the road were, the game helpfully signposts the first pile of seed.



» [Arcade] It's all gone wrong for Wile E, strangled to cartoon and therefore temporary death by his pogo stick's spring.

CONVERSION CAPERS

Although simpler arcade games sometimes arrived on home systems relatively unscathed, it was probably asking for trouble when someone suggested converting *Road Runner*. A game with loads of background graphics and fast-paced gameplay hardly survives when a multiload enters the equation, and *Road Runner* had a particularly loathsome example.

"Cassette owners will be overjoyed to hear that the multiload system is one of the worst I've seen," moaned Steve Jarratt in *Zzap!64* about the otherwise faithful C64 conversion, adding that it starts play immediately on loading, before players have a chance to react. On consoles, the game fared a little better due to instant loading from cartridge, but both the NES and Atari 2600 versions suffer from nasty difficulty spikes.



> "It would be great to add back the cartoons as rewards, because that part was really neat"

mines, which would cause a loss of life. Specific themed sections – mazes, highways, canyons – ensured players would stay glued to the machine in order to see what came next.

Greg considers that although most of the gameplay was already present prior to the 'conversion', that didn't stop the team fine-tuning what was being created on the new hardware. "The standard deal at the time was each group had a lab, and once we had something we thought sort of worked, we'd put it on a cab outside the door," he recalls. "During breaks, you could walk around and play someone's game in progress. There'd be this huge piece of paper on the side and you could write whatever you wanted." With Atari engineers mostly being keen gamers, Greg says this feedback became a continuous and essential play-by-play editorial: "You'd pop out of the lab and might have 50 comments, and with *Road Runner*, we got a lot of feedback. Since Ed was still at Atari at the time, he was able to give suggestions on what people ought to do, the timings, and things of that nature."

When it came to working on the game, Greg recalls that it wasn't particularly troublesome, bar a few of the special effects, such as getting characters to appear in front of or behind other objects, fall properly, and jump between rock pedestals in the canyon sequence. Primarily, though, the biggest concern was timing. "When something really bad is going to happen – when your death is imminent – you want the player to have two or three seconds of advance warning," explains Greg. "You want them to have enough time for their brain to realise this, for adrenaline to kick in, and for them to have some kind of reaction to it."

Greg recalls that this thinking stemmed from early games Atari produced that were considered unfair. One example was *Sea Wolf*, where you could get shot from behind and never know why you died, and therefore couldn't fool yourself into thinking you could learn to beat the game. "If you can see your death coming – even if you can't do anything about it – and if you can see what you did wrong, you can believe that you can win next time," says Greg. "So that's what we did throughout *Road Runner*: you'd see one of the cars coming, and you'd think you could skim around it. But you'd turn the wrong way and: FOOMP! It'd carry your carcass off the screen. You'd be given a few seconds to reset, and then you'd do it again!"

Looking back, Greg is pretty happy with *Road Runner*, although he admits that he'd love to try crafting something closer to the original vision. "It would be great to add back the cartoons as reward/failure stuff, because that part of the game was really neat and cartoons are always fun," he says. "But it would also be good to just add more levels; more variety so that instead of repeating the same four cycles, you'd give the player something to reach for."

At the second attempt, *Road Runner* finally made it into the arcades in 1985, before being converted to various home systems. Despite it being released during a time of severe contraction within the industry, Mike jokes that *Road Runner* was "successful enough that we all got our bonuses". And while it didn't match the goals of the original concept, the game remains a much-loved title.



» [Arcade] It ditched Laserdisc backgrounds for more traditional fare, but *Road Runner* was nonetheless one of the best-looking arcade games of the Eighties.



» [Arcade] With a shocked expression, Wile E barely avoids a cannonball.



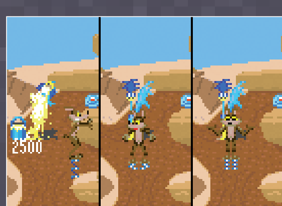
» [Arcade] The Road Runner and Wile E jump over perilous drops, wondering who in their right mind would leave birdseed and landmines atop rocky columns.



» [Arcade] The moment Wile E has been dreaming of since 1949: finally, he'll get some Road Runner-flavoured lunch.



» [Arcade] Wile E looks on aghast as the Road Runner goes up in flames. He likes his meat rare, not well done.



» [Arcade] Despite ditching cartoon footage, *Road Runner* still includes animation, such as this gem involving 'invisible paint'.



» [Arcade] Just to rub in the fact that Wile E's been burnt to a cinder, the Road Runner quaffs some ice-cold lemonade.



» [Arcade] Having trodden on a landmine, a blackened version of Wile E sends smoke signals skyward.



THE OLIVER TWINS

The Oliver twins' Blitz Games Studios has been running for an astonishingly successful 19 years. Retro Gamer caught up with the famous twins at their Leamington Spa offices in order to discuss everything from Dizzy to 3D gaming...

PHILIP AND ANDREW OLIVER have come a long way since making type-ins on the Dragon 32. As Philip proudly shows us original sketches of various Dizzy maps, and reviews of all their games from every magazine they've ever been printed in, it's soon abundantly clear that these guys love games and are fiercely proud of the titles that got them to where they are today. In an industry that's constantly chasing the next big thing, it's refreshing to discover a company this proud of its background, and as we look upon a glass cabinet filled with every game the brothers have ever been involved with, we begin to realise just what makes these two charmingly unassuming guys so absolutely brilliant. Read on and discover for yourselves



RETRO GAMER: To start off with, please tell us about Ivan and his Apple II.

ANDREW OLIVER: Right from junior school, Ivan was a good friend of ours and his dad was a computer programmer. When Apple first started making their early computers, you could buy these things in kit form and make them up. He brought home this brand new Apple II, and he knew exactly how it worked. He'd be working on it, but then he'd let his 12-year-old son Ivan play games on it. He had various games, copies of *Space Invaders* and *Pac-Man*, which had just come out in the arcade. People were just starting to copy them across, so this must have been about 1980 when we really got into playing games in the evenings.

RG: Your website mentions how it took six months of paper-round labour before you could get your Dragon 32. That shows an amazing amount of focus for such a young age. Have you always been that driven?

AO: We were something like 13 or 14 and we got 50p pocket money each. In those days it was kind of reasonable, but the point is computers were something like £200 and we realised that it was going to take forever. So it was just a case of doing what we could to speed things up. We would bribe our mum and dad for money in return for washing the car or mowing the lawn. So, yeah, we picked up a paper round because the cash just wasn't coming fast enough and we wanted our own computer.

PHILIP OLIVER: Luckily, when we got halfway our parents paid the rest.

RG: After getting your BBC, you entered and won a competition on The Saturday Show. Can you tell us a little about that?

PO: Well, it was a funny experience because we received this phone call one evening from someone who said 'Hello, can I speak to Philip or Andrew?' Before they had even introduced themself they asked me my age, because they knew we had entered the competition and that some people might lie about their age. They confirmed we'd won this national 'design a game competition', so they paid for us to go the studio in Birmingham. Our parents obviously took us there and we stayed at an all-expenses-paid family hotel. *The Saturday Show* was filmed live and was hosted by Jeremy Beadle, Isla Sinclair and Tommy Boyd, and they were people you really knew back then, and they really looked after us during the filming. The funniest thing, though, was that we didn't have a video recorder back then, so sadly we don't have that footage. On the next Monday, all of our friends were excitedly saying 'You were on the telly! That's amazing.

RG: So, how did the two of you make games together? We've always had visions of the two of you fighting for control.

DOWNLOAD THE PODCAST

For the full lowdown on the twins' interview, visit
www.imagine-publishing.co.uk/podcasts.php



THE OLIVER TWINS' TIMELINE

Black Box And Gambit 1984
Battlefields 1984
Tellscope 1984
Cavey 1984
Easy Art 1984
Panda Sprites 1985
Magic Maths 1985
Magic Clock 1985
Killapede 1985
Super Robin Hood 1986
Ghost Hunters 1986
3D Starfighter 1986
Ski Simulator 1986
Grand Prix Simulator 1986
Dizzy 1986
Fruit Machine Simulator 1987
Incredible Shrinking Sphere 1987
Pro BMX Simulator 1987
Advanced Pinball Simulator 1987
Fast Food 1987
Treasure Island Dizzy 1988
The Race Against Time 1988
Jet Bike Simulator 1988
Grand Prix Simulator 2 1988
Fantasy World Dizzy 1988
Ghostbusters II 1988
Operation Gunship 1989
Kwik Snax 1989
Magicland Dizzy 1990
Dizzy Panic 1990
Bubble Dizzy 1990
Dizzy Prince Of Yolkfolk 1990
Spellbound Dizzy 1990
Dizzy Down The Rapids 1991
Fantastic Dizzy 1991
Crystal Kingdom Dizzy 1991
Firehawk 1991
Robin Hood: Legend Quest 1992
Marko's Magic Football 1994
Judge Dredd 1995
Firo & Klawd 1996
WarGames 1998
Glover 1998
Disney's The Little Mermaid II 2000
Frogger 2: Swampy's Revenge 2000
Action Man: Operation Extreme 2000
Chicken Run 2000
The Mummy Returns 2001
Fuzion Frenzy 2001
Zapper: One Wicked Cricket! 2002
Taz: Wanted 2002
Barbie Horse Adventures: Blue Ribbon Race 2003
Bad Boys: Miami Takedown 2004
Bratz: Rock Angelz 2005
Pac-Man World 3 2005
SpongeBob SquarePants: Creature From The Krusty Krab 2006
Bratz: Forever Diamondz 2006
Reservoir Dogs 2006
Karaoke Revolution Presents American Idol 2006
Bratz: The Movie 2007
Burger King Games 2007
SpongeBob Squarepants: Atlantis Squarepantis 2007
SpongeBob Squarepants: Underpants Slam 2008
Bratz: Girlz Really Rock 2008
Karaoke Revolution American Idol Encore 2008
Tak and the Guardians of Gross 2008
PowerUp Forever 2008
Are You Smarter Than a 5th Grader 2008
Karaoke Revolution American Idol Encore 2 2009
Invincible Tiger: The Legend of Han Tao (3D) 2009
Buccaneer: The Pursuit of Infamy 2009
CodaChain 2009
Droplitz 2009
KrissX 2009
Karaoke Revolution 2009 2009
Dead to Rights: Retribution 2010

AO: Philip was the older one, and actually now, as we run our company he takes the more managerial role while I'm more technical. He would generally have the bigger idea and was always looking at the bigger plan while I just loved the hardcore coding. To be perfectly honest, our company was at 70-odd people and I was still coding games like *Chicken Run* on the PlayStation because I just didn't want to let go.

RG: You'd both switch shifts back in the day on your single computer in order to get work finished. That's quite a regimented approach for someone so young.

PO: Yes, we were quite demanding of each other. We always wanted to program, not just for the sake of programming, but also to achieve a result. And the result was getting something published, which was just… wow! If I've just done two hours of coding, I wanted Andrew to do two hours of coding, too. We'd get to a point where we would each say 'I'm going to work for a certain amount of time and now it's your turn and I'm going to get some sleep.'

RG: Being brothers, could you perhaps get that little bit more out of the other person?

AO: There's absolutely no doubt about it, and actually if you look at all the software companies, particularly in the UK, they're all brothers. It's because there's an element of competition, but there is also an element of collaboration.

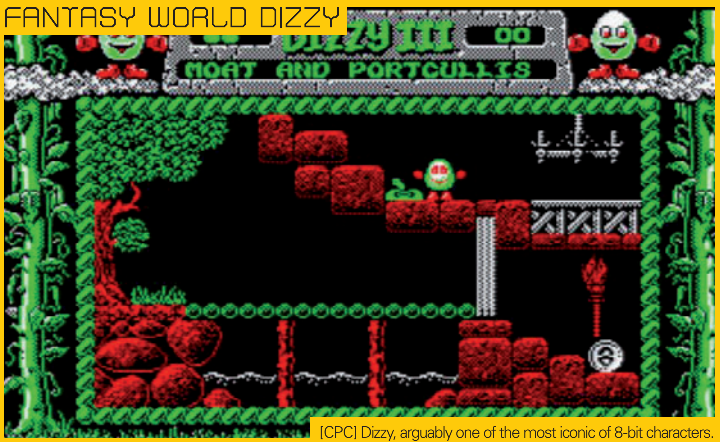
PO: And also when you're feeling down on your luck, you can't go 'Oh, just get lost', because they're, like, 'Well, I live here.' [Laughs.] It's, like, 'I ain't going anywhere, and by the way, that computer's half mine.'

RG: Were your games made on the Amstrad then ported to the Spectrum originally?

AO: In the end we wrote some middleware. We wrote *Super Robin Hood* and paid somebody else to convert it onto the Spectrum and he took a long time. We created the whole of *Ghost Hunters* while he was still working on copying *Super Robin Hood*. We ended up writing a

* FIVE TO PLAY

FANTASY WORLD DIZZY



[CPC] Dizzy, arguably one of the most iconic of 8-bit characters.

THE DIZZY SERIES is where the Olivers made their name, and picking the best title from the seminal series is no easy task. If pushed, we will hand the accolade to *Fantasy World Dizzy*, which captures all the elements that make the series popular while also adding a few new elements, such as the popular Yolkfolk, extra lives, and dialogue boxes, which went on to become mainstays in the series. Like *Super Robin Hood*, *Fantasy World Dizzy* found its hero on a perilous rescue mission, trying to save his beloved Daisy, who is trapped inside a weird fantasy realm of dinosaurs, dragons and all manner of freakish prehistoric and fantastical enemies. It's a meticulously crafted little game, full of imagination and nice touches, and it reinstates the life system that was so frustratingly missing from *Treasure Island Dizzy*. In the words of the Oliver Twins, it's "absolutely brilliant".

SUPER ROBIN HOOD



[CPC] The twins were paid a cool £10,000 for *Super Robin Hood*.

HELP ROBIN RESCUE his love, Maid Marian, from the evil Sheriff of Nottingham, who has her enslaved in his castle. Starting the Oliver Twins' success at Codemasters, *Super Robin Hood* was an enjoyable arcade action title that received an equally brilliant sequel in 1992 with *Robin Hood: Legend Quest*. With its impressive digitised speech, bright colourful graphics, a well-known swashbuckling hero leading the charge, and some excellent ledges-and-ladders action, the game fast became a popular budget title for Codemasters, even getting ported to the NES as part of its Quattro Adventure cartridge pack. Not bad for a first game for a new company, we think you'll agree.

GRAND PRIX SIMULATOR



[CPC] A solid tribute to hit arcade games like *Super Sprint*.

WHILE ALL THOSE early Codemasters games brandishing the 'simulator' suffix had to be taken with a pinch of salt, that didn't make them any less enjoyable. Obviously inspired by the top-down racing classic *Super Sprint*, *Grand Prix Simulator* did a proficient job of condensing the excellent experience of that arcade classic into a fun racing game for home microcomputers. While today it looks a little dated – the cars in the game now resemble iPods – *Grand Prix Simulator* has an impressive 14 tracks, including various dangers such as oil slicks and even spanners that awarded you score bonuses. A simulator it might not be, but enjoyable it most certainly was.

GHOSTBUSTERS II



[CPC] The twins would often do ports for Codemasters on the sly.

THE OLIVER TWINS were big fans of *Ghostbusters*, which was one of the main inspirations behind the game *Ghost Hunters*, the spiritual sequel to *Super Robin Hood*, so when the opportunity came up to write the Spectrum and Amstrad version of *Ghostbusters II* for Atari, the twins jumped at the chance. Armed with the film script and very little else, they created a game of three very distinctive parts, each based on a key scene from the movie. While a game of such ambition required a lot of disk swapping, loading, and messing around with controls, in terms of its presentation and how well it captures the spirit of the source material, *Ghostbusters II was* unequivocally a success.

GLOVER



[N64] *Glover*, a truly superb platformer that deserves a sequel.

WHEN A WIZARD almost blows himself up after mixing a volatile potion, he turns to stone and inadvertently rocks seven life-giving crystals away from their spires, causing the land to turn grey and gloomy. It falls to one of the magician's magical gloves, the titular Glover, to sort the whole mess out. Playing like a cross between *Mario 64* and *Marko's Magic Football*, *Glover* is a colourful 3D platformer that features an interesting gameplay mechanic: Glover is accompanied by a rubber ball that can change into various ball types. Progression relies on Glover using it to get around the stages in the game, and while the controls can feel a tad fiddly, the mechanic fits the genre like a glove.

system that was compatible with both computers, so that when we ended up pressing 'compile' it would generate both versions.

RG: So would you say that the Amstrad was better than the Commodore 64 and Spectrum?

[Both start laughing.]

PO: We were at school and people were either in the Spectrum camp or the Commodore camp. The funny thing is, it's always been that way. Today it's the Sony, Nintendo or Microsoft camps.

RG: We'll lay it on the line and admit that we were Amstrad boys, so we're quite chuffed you worked on that machine over the others.

AO: I have to say that the Amstrad was slightly geekier, but it was without doubt a better machine. We really got on well with the Amstrad and there weren't many people producing games for it, which was where we really excelled. Amstrad was certainly better than the Spectrum, but the Spectrum was more commercially successful, so we primarily designed it on the Amstrad then made them work on the Spectrum.

PO: Were we in the Commodore 64 camp? No, we weren't. Should we have been? Probably.

RG: How did your parents feel about your chosen profession?

AO: We have two older brothers and a sister and they had all gone to university, so it was assumed that we would, too. Even though there were programming courses at university, they were programming databases and mainframes and no graphics were involved, and we just had no interest in doing that. It was actually our head teacher who convinced our parents that we should take a year out and see if we could make a living out of making games. They probably thought we'd fail and get it out of our system.



PO: It didn't work. [Laughs.]

AO: Before, when we were writing games, we had to go to school every day, so suddenly we had all day long and we met up with Richard and David Darling, who were just setting up Codemasters. We showed them some demos and they said 'That looks really interesting. You could publish games through us. Go away and write a game and we'll see how it goes.'

PO: I can remember asking them at ECTS [European Computer Trade Show]. 'This Robin Hood game, what would you pay us for that?' When they turned around and said £10,000, we nearly fell over ourselves. The most we'd ever got at that point was £200 and we would have snatched their hands off for just £500.

AO: A month after the game's release, a cheque turned up for $10,000, and six months later we'd had about three number ones [*Super Robin Hood*, *Ghost Hunters* and *Dizzy*], so it was becoming pretty obvious that we weren't going to go to university.

RG: Why did your collaboration with Codemasters continue for so long? Did you see the Darling brothers as kindred spirits?

PO: They were good friends, who we respected.

AO: They were computer programmers who'd had a few very successful years and wanted to move into publishing, but they needed someone to write the games, which was where we came in. It was a mutual respect for each other. They tended to their part of publishing, organising and putting a portfolio together, while we wrote a lot of their games. We used to go on holiday together. We'd go skiing, jet skiing, quad biking and we'd enjoy camping trips together. We were mates.

PO: In fact, we even bought a speedboat together.



» A selection of the many games the twins have been involved with. Andrew made the Yolkfolk himself.

> **"With brothers there's an element of competition and collaboration"**

RG: Codemasters was pretty much a success from the word go. Did you not think back then that you should be doing this?

PO: Definitely, when we look back at it now as business people. But back then we were just school-kid programmers who were thankful to have our games published. We put our heads down and we just worked stupid hours and we didn't think about anything else and we were happy making games and getting well paid.

AO: We're still making games now. We're just making them in a different way. The money they were paying us and the fact that our games were selling really well made us just want to make more, better games.

RG: What was the secret to your success back then?

AO: Hard work. We didn't get anywhere without a lot of hard work.

PO: Definitely, and also thinking about the audience. We'd think 'Right, we're selling this on the Spectrum. What kind of person would buy this game?' One of the things we did with *Dizzy* was ask ourselves who owns a Spectrum. Well, it's eight- to 12-year-olds. There are a few girls in there as well, so what would they want? We always used to think of it from that point of view. We wrote games for our audience and not for ourselves, which many did back then.

AO: Therefore a lot of our games were quite different. It's amazing. You go back to some of those games and they'll kill you in 30 seconds because they're just so hardcore.

RG: The CD compilation caused a huge fuss when it came out. How did that come about?

AO: The concept came about because we hated…

PO: …loading cassettes… [Laughing.]

AO: …with a passion and we wanted high-quality tapes. We were looking around and realised that a lot of people who had computers had CD players. We used to go to the factory where they duplicated our audio cassettes and they commented on how difficult it was to duplicate

cassettes because you have this 20- to 30-metre length of magnetic tape that had to be rolled onto little wheels and then put into plastic casing. In the same factory, they were just upgrading to CDs and they showed us this very fancy machine that was stamping them out. At that point, a cassette cost around £1 to make, while the CD was about 20p. We just thought it was madness. We should be selling our games on CD. I remember Philip coding it and trying to work out how the hell to get it to work.

PO: It wasn't quite as easy as you might have thought.

AO: I remember that we took a load of short cuts. We did it via an analogue – not digital – output, because the Spectrum was expecting an analogue signal through the headphone socket. So, effectively, we wrote a fast loader, and we got it up to eight to ten times the normal loading speed on the CD. So we actually wrote the first games published on CD, including the system.

RG: We just remember all the great games on it.

PO: Yeah, there were 20 games on it and there's another funny story here. For a start you could load a game in about ten seconds…

AO: …on the Spectrum. Which was amazingly fast. People who got it working loved it.

PO: We decided that, just in case there was a scratch on the CD, or there was a bit of a problem, we would save all the games on there twice. We wrote a line in the book saying that if you added 20 to the track number there would be another copy of it. The funny thing was, the game we mentioned in the booklet was actually corrupted, but the track+20 did work. [Laughs.]

RG: What was it like working for the console market?

AO: The major difference was that it was a cartridge and a completely different business model. You were making a one-off master that had to be completely reliable as duplication was very expensive. So it was completely different from what we were used to. Our early games were very UK-centric, although they did get around Europe and I do remember having to translate games into French, German and Spanish.

PO: I remember trying to translate something into Japanese once on my own. That was hard work.

AO: The games going onto cartridges was a big deal. You couldn't make mistakes. It had to be 100 per cent reliable and bug free.

PO: Definitely. There was such a pressure on the quality assurance and making sure it was right.

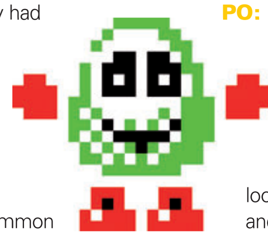
AO: We were pretty good on the Spectrum games, making sure they were bug free, but you could always replace duplicated cassettes if someone found a problem or complained, whereas cartridges (as with the CDs, DVDs and Blu-rays of today) you really have to get it right first time. Actually, it does worry me that the industry is starting to fall back into the: 'Oh, it's all right, we can patch it later' mindset. I think it's a really messy thing to do. I actually liked it when we went to cartridges and we had to be regimented and make sure it was perfect first time.

RG: What benefits did the Aladdin Deck Enhancer offer you?

AO: It was a plug-through cartridge. The Nintendo console had a small amount of internal RAM and your game was all in ROM, which was actually quite a significant difference from what we'd been used to. Those ROM chips kept getting bigger and bigger, though. Mario was tiny, but some of the bigger games were starting to get up to 32K to 64K…

PO: *Mega Man* and other games like that…

AO: And you quickly realised that they weren't just using bigger ROMs. Some with really good graphics had more RAM on the cartridge, too. So when Codemasters started making their own cartridges they had this idea where they said 'It's always the same in every game, so what we want to do is sell a ROM chip of the main game and the rest of the cartridge – the RAM and other common expensive components – would all be sold separately.' It was effectively separating the cartridge into two halves, resulting in great games at half the retail price.



RG: And why did you leave Codemasters?

AO: They were very good as European publishers on the computers and we had, through time, been introduced to a whole new market of console games.

PO: And America.

AO: We travelled to America and it really opened up our eyes. We were writing in a small country and the trade shows were fairly small and modest. And then we went to America, spent time in flash hotels and went to huge trade shows. It was a different world. We just went 'Oh my God!' When we were selling *Dizzy*, we thought we were doing really well with 100,000 or 200,000 copies sold and being top of the charts.

PO: But then you go to America and *Mario*'s selling something ridiculous like 12 or 15 million and you go 'Woah!' And, what's more, we were looking at these games and thinking…

AO: …we could write that.

PO: …we could do that. It was slicker than our games, but only a bit.

AO: So anyway, when you go to these trade shows you start talking to the other publishers, like the Activisions and Electronic Arts of this world, and while we were loyal to Codemasters they struggled to get established in the American market.

> "We learned a lot of ugly lessons from setting up and running our own company"



*NUMBER CRUNCHING

Then known as Interactive Studios Blitz Games was formed in **1990**

The Oliver Twins have worked on **7** simulator titles for Codemasters

Fantasy Island Dizzy scored **94** per cent in *Crash* magazine

There are **6** members of the Yolkfolk including Dizzy, Daisy, Dozy, Denzil, Dylan and Grand Dizzy

The twins first met David and Richard Darling at ECTS in September **1985**

The Olivers both worked on *Pac-Man World* ***3***

Black Box And Gambit was the brothers' first published game, released in **1984**

The twins' first computer was a Dragon **32**

There are a total of **13** Dizzy games and spin-offs

Grand Prix Simulator sold a staggering **250,000** copies



» Just one of the many newspaper clippings that Philip proudly showed off when we visited the twins.

At the end of the day we decided we could just go to the publishers that were already there…

PO: So that's what we did.

AO: We left about a year later and started making games for the American market, and nowadays quite a few of our games only come out in America. It's somewhat depressing sometimes, because the guys here don't get to see them in the shops.

PO: Yeah, but if you had the situation where you have to decide whether you only want your games to come out here, or to just come out in America, then America's going to make ten times more money and will be way more successful.

RG: What was it like setting up Interactive Studios, as Blitz Games was first known?

AO: We were being quite successful and had a lot of money and there were people who were coming into the industry who were completely fresh to it all. We could see they had a lot of talent and we were paying them to help us out with bits of work here and there. Before we left Codemasters, it got to the point where we had about three people that we just agreed to pay on a weekly basis in order to create any art that we needed.

We learned a lot of ugly lessons from setting up and running our own company, and personally I preferred to stay out of it and I really have to thank Philip for dealing with all the issues like rent and wages.

PO: I didn't actually mind, though. I used to find it fun and challenging. It's challenging making a videogame, but it can be just as challenging setting up an office.

AO: It was kind of an easy split, because Philip really got into it, while I just hated it and would turn my back on it and just buried myself in my work. I looked after the guys writing the games, while Philip managed all the office accounts and legal side of things, and it's been like that ever since.

RG: Why did you rename the studio Blitz Games?

AO: We thought Interactive Studios was a cool name that summed up exactly what we did. The only problem was that the internet was coming up and we needed to have a web presence, but this was also the time when all the movie studios started making their presence known online, so you had Disney Interactive, Warner Interactive, Universal Interactive… In the press you'd always read "interactive studios" and what they actually meant was Hollywood.

PO: They didn't mean us. [Laughing.]

AO: If you typed our name into the search engine it would always refer to somebody else. It was just too generic a name. In fact, the only worse thing we could have done is if we had called ourselves 'Multimedia Studios'. We knew we needed a new name, and just up the road is Rare, who we have a great respect for. Anyway, their name is short and punchy and you immediately know what it is, so we looked around for some ideas and came up with the idea of Blitz.

PO: Which actually has two meanings.

AO: We always thought of it in the context of a marketing blitz and really going for it, whereas we do have Coventry…

PO: …as our neighbours…

AO: …and Coventry is famous for the Blitz, so every now and then we do get people saying we named it because of our location. It didn't cross our minds at the time, but it does keep coming up.

RG: Could you tell us a little about your sub studios?

AO: As Blitz Games, we became known for family-friendly titles like *Frogger*, *Pac-Man*, *SpongeBob*, *Bratz*, and we've made a good business out of it. You do get pigeon-holed, though, which is frustrating as we love racing games and shooting games as much as anyone else and are also very technology-based.

We had an issue that at the end of the PlayStation we wrote *Lilo & Stitch*, *Frogger*, *Action Man* and a couple of others, and we couldn't get hold of PlayStation 2 dev kits because you had to get them from publishers when you had signed contracts for

games. Publishers want to sign up hardcore titles for the early adopters and we really suffered because we didn't get on the PlayStation 2 when we should have done. We'd pigeon-holed ourselves really badly and wanted to make sure the same thing didn't happen when the next wave of machines came along, so we picked up the *Bad Boys* and *Reservoir Dogs* film licences to try and stamp our mark and prove that we could do mature games.

When we came to selling *Reservoir Dogs*, however, we discovered that we were known to the outside world for making family-friendly games, and Tarantino fans wanted to know why a family-friendly company was making the game. We thought to ourselves that if we had a breakaway team of core people from here and had set up a new company everyone would have accepted it.

We put it under a new label called Volatile Games. The division is still in the office – there is no separate limited company – and it's just a label that was put onto the game to say 'This is a group of passionate and talented people who make mature games'. We began looking at other areas and we could see that digital downloads were coming and felt that it was a really interesting way forward and we'd be able to write our own original, creative IP. To make the distinction between the big games that we were known for and these new smaller games we came up with Blitz Arcade. We also have 24 people in our technology division, BlitzTech. We rebranded the company to give each of the six divisions its own identity.

TruSim is an extremely interesting one. I go to conferences a lot and I see other people using computers for training purposes and medical applications and flight simulators, and I always end up thinking that the graphics aren't very good. We've shown people demos in these fields and asked whether they've ever thought of using a videogame company. We have a very powerful engine that is completely cross-platform that can run fantastic visuals on laptops. We've done some medical simulation work, building visualisation, and we've blown people away.

RG: Many of your games are based on popular US licences. Why do you go with these games as opposed to original IP?

AO: It's very expensive to create your own games. When Lara Croft came out everyone was saying that this is what we should do – create our own Lara Croft. The problem is, however, that nine out of ten of the games that get created in the hopes of being the next Lara Croft die. And it's a very, very risky thing to do to put all your eggs in one basket and passionately go after a certain dream of creating something new. It does occasionally work, and those people have made a lot of money, but the other nine out of ten bankrupt themselves and have to go out and get regular jobs. We just aren't up to taking that sort of risk.

With the new digital download services like Xbox Live there is scope to create creative original games and that's what we're doing. To be honest, though, there's not much of a downside to working on other people's licences. We actually find it an exciting challenge to work with Hollywood companies. We respect what they do and the effort that goes into their movies and cartoons. We learn so much from them. I absolutely loved working with Aardman on *Chicken Run*. They're geniuses, and the amount that we learned about characterisation was on another level compared to anything we could have done by just sitting at our own desks making regular videogames.

RG: The most amazing thing we've seen today, besides Philip's Dizzy cup, is 3D TV – it's absolutely gob-smacking. Where do you see it fitting into the videogame industry?

AO: It's the future of videogames, it's the future of television, it's the future of films. It's adding a new dimension and a new level to things…

PO: A new level of immersion.

AO: Videogames have always been about immersion and we have the ability to be interactive, whereas films tend to be linear. But they've now found a way to make their films more immersive, and we're not talking about red-and-blue glasses, we're talking really amazing 3D. I felt that we could create this 3D on a console, despite the naysayers who said it couldn't be done. As a programmer and a completely logical person, I just couldn't see any reason why it couldn't be done. It was really, really hard to get working, but we have did. And the results are…

RG: Well, they're amazing. Absolutely amazing.

AO: I've been showing this to a lot of publishers now, and within one minute I can make their jaw drop and they'll say they didn't think that was possible. Admittedly, it only works on a small percentage of televisions, but TV manufacturers are committed to making them and they're putting it into regular TVs. If you buy an HD channel in the next year or so there's a good chance that it's going to be 3D. The moment somebody…

PO: …us…

AO: …brings out a 3D game and people see them, the world will suddenly want more.

RG: You've been running Blitz Games for 19 years. What do you think is the secret to your success?

AO: Passion, commitment and very hard work. We both still work into the early hours every night. We're also measured and we're realistic. People have said to us 'Make your own big, impressive games', but it's just too risky. I would rather be in business than chasing that massive dream of creating the next big thing and then going 'Oh dear, it's all gone horribly wrong'. We have always just been really careful.

PO: When's the last time you bought a lottery ticket?

AO: I've never bought a lottery ticket.

PO: There you go.

> "It's risky to put all your eggs in one basket and passionately go after something new"

AO: It would be madness. It's just a tax on people who are bad at maths.

RG: In a way, you could argue that you've done the big dream already with Dizzy.

PO: Have we?

RG: Well, let's face it, Dizzy was massive, wasn't it?

PO: People always think that *Dizzy* was massive, but the kind of money we were making is insignificant when compared with the games that we're writing these days. Back then, selling 100,000, or 200,000 games was very successful, but these days, pretty much all our *Bratz* games did about a million copies at ten times the price.

RG: So why do you think Dizzy remains so popular?

PO: That is nice… [Laughs.]…and of course we're extremely proud of it.

AO: Obviously there was a big series of games and they were quite creative. We were literally trying to create a fantasy book/cartoon adventure – games that would take hours and hours to play and would be interesting. I think they really caught people's imaginations and they became absorbed in them like a book. We were so minimalist with our graphics, but people kind of filled in the gaps.

RG: Would you ever consider bringing him bring back?

AO: I do have the dream that one day Dizzy will come back. The thing is, everyone has such fond memories I wouldn't want to spoil those memories or ruin it. It would have to be something really…

PO: …special.

AO: It would need the budget of our other games and then you have to find someone to take that leap of faith. I think it could be done. You look at the magical worlds of Disney, Pixar…

PO: … and *Shrek*. *Shrek* is the one that when I went to the cinema and saw it I thought to myself 'That's what Dizzy would have been if it had grown up properly. That's where it should have been.'

AO: So there you go. *Dizzy* is now *Shrek*. [Both laugh.]

PO: Ironically, we nearly did the game of *Shrek*, but that's a completely different story.

RG: How do you think the videogame industry has changed over the decades?

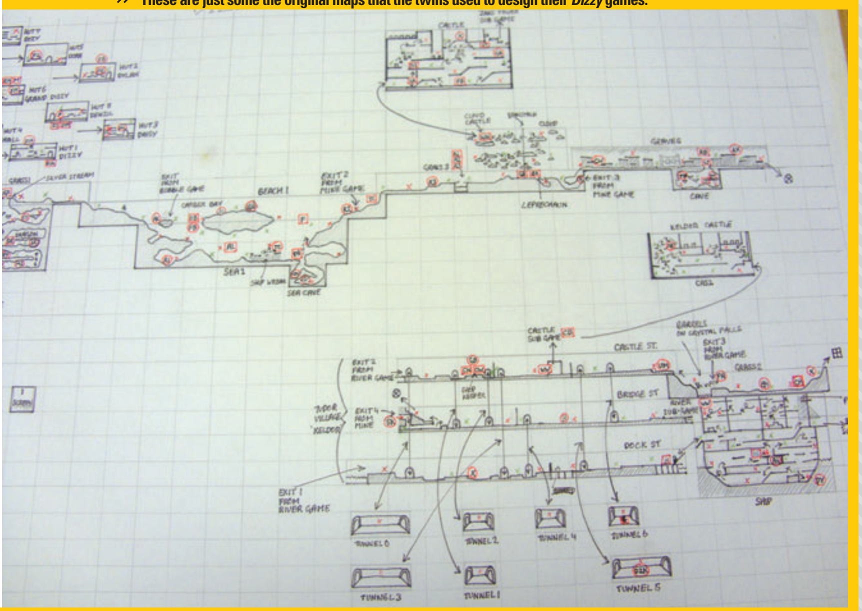
AO: It's become more risk averse, and I think we were one of the first ones to become risk averse. The creativity has been lost a bit, but it's grown up and become very professional with big budgets, serious contracts, big players and games going out with film-like productions. People complain about the lack of creativity…

PO: …but with digital distribution it's coming back again.

AO: It goes through waves. You can't get anything more original than Wii at the moment. When people say you've lost creativity, that's just not true. It's still there and so are we.



» These are just some the original maps that the twins used to design their *Dizzy* games.



» Every single newspaper clipping and review has been stored by the twins.



YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS

We weren't surprised when you flooded us with your questions for the Olivers; they're been behind so many of our most memorable games

Who came up with the cruel collapsing bridge in Dizzy?

AO: Christ knows. We made the games so quickly that we didn't really play them much ourselves. We'd play it once or twice, but the thing is that you're so close to it that for us it was easy, because you're playing it while you're debugging it. These games didn't go out with much 'focus testing', as we like to call it now.

Why is the distribution of your old 8-bit games denied on sites like World of Spectrum?

AO: It's Codemasters, not us. We don't mind people playing our old games; we have no problems at all.

PO: It's quite fun.

AO: We're proud of those games and are happy for people to see them. They're a publisher, though, and they have to act as a publisher does and protect the distribution. At the end of the day, though, it's old stuff and it's not like you're going to pay money for it. I don't know why, but it's not us.



Would you ever consider making a brand new Spectrum game just for the fun of it?

PO: Nope. [Both laugh.]

AO: It's great that people have fond memories of the games, but honestly, the games we make now are much bigger and better in so many ways. What I would say is I did find it fun when I was writing *Chicken Run*, because they were showing me shorts cuts from the film where you had to use things like spoons and wire cutters to get free and we were like…

PO: …that sounds like a *Dizzy* game.

AO: If you go and play *Chicken Run* on the PSone it is just *Dizzy*. Dizzy has grown up and he's no longer an egg, but a chicken called Ginger.

PO: And it answers that age-old question about which came first.

Were all your games really "absolutely brilliant"?

[Both laugh.]

AO: It's an expression we used to use and it got quoted a lot. We always wanted them to be absolutely brilliant.

PO: Hey, wait a minute. If it was printed it must be true. [More laughing.] They were absolutely brilliant value for money, though.

Did you come up with any simulator ideas that were turned down?

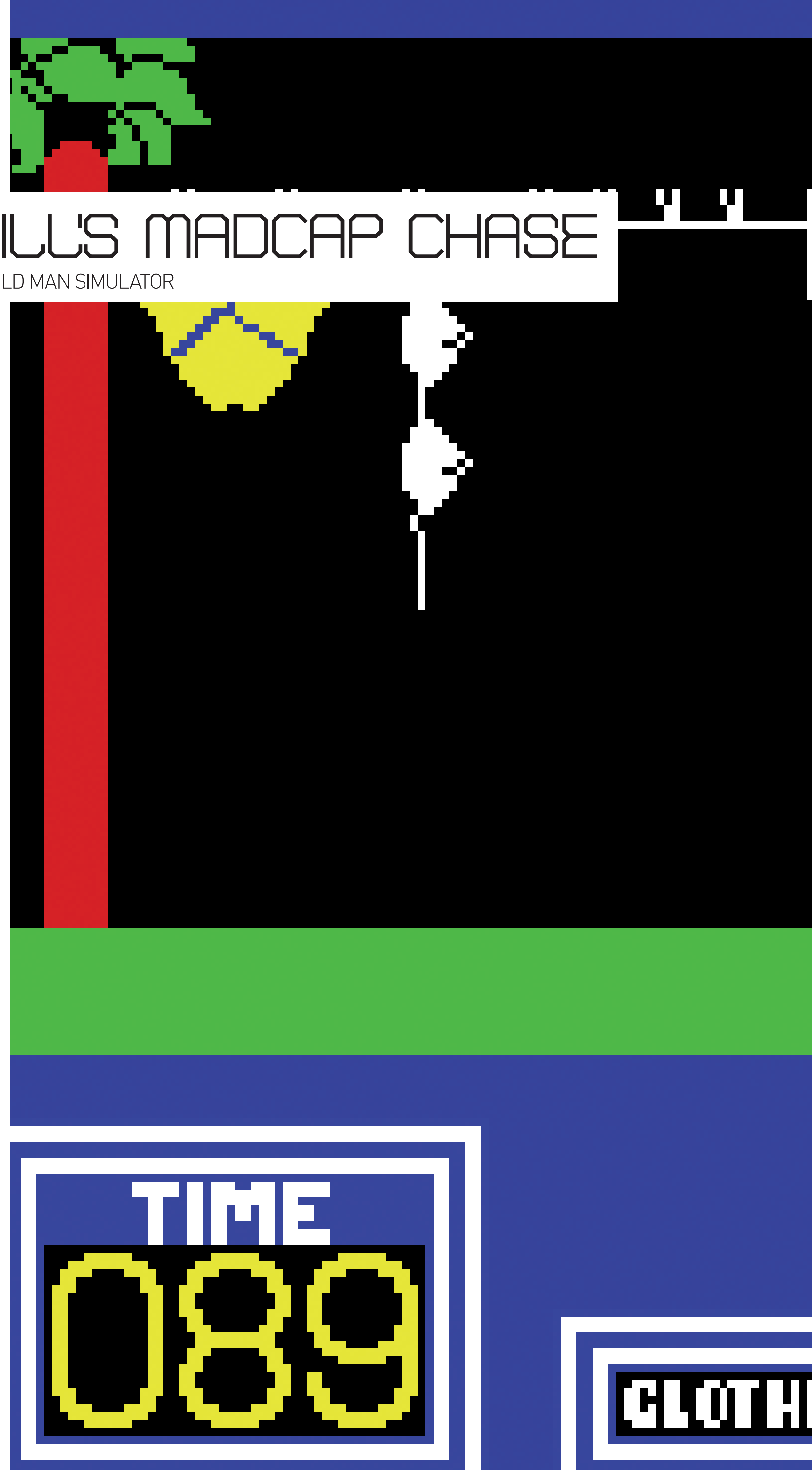
AO: No. Ideas were never turned down, because in those days they never paid you up front.

PO: We would just make the game we wanted and say 'Do you want it?'

AO: We did every game we wanted to make and we gave it to them and it got published, and that's really the way it was.

PO: One of the ideas we came up with was a helicopter gunship simulator. We felt it would be really great. The funny thing was the guy who had to illustrate the front covers was a contractor who never got to see the games. When he did the cover for *Dizzy* he never saw what the game looked like, we just described it to him over the phone. We turned up at Codemasters having just completed *Gunship Simulator* and they showed us the front cover. It was this lovely battleship at sea and we were, like, 'Where's the helicopter?' He just said 'Gunship. Look, it's a gunship. It's a ship with guns on it.'





BENNY HILL'S MADCAP CHASE

THE WORLD'S ONLY CREEPY OLD MAN SIMULATOR



- **PUBLISHER:** DK'TRONICS LTD
- **RELEASED:** 1985
- **GENRE:** ACTION
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** SPECTRUM
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** NEXT TO NOTHING



HISTORY

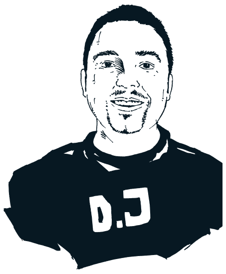
I was a bit too young to really appreciate the comedy antics of Benny Hill. At the time the show aired on television all I remember was watching the end credits, where a sped-up Benny would chase liberally clothed women around like an antagonised wasp against a chirpy soundtrack. Thinking back, the entire thing was actually quite bizarre, and, I'm sure, had the video been slowed down to the actual pace and the sound effects removed, the closing credits would have seemed far more sinister.

Anyway, while most will associate the chunky sprites of Don Priestley with the cartoon worlds of *Popeye* and *Trap Door*, the programmer was also responsible for bringing the madcap world of *Benny Hill* to the Spectrum, creating what can only be described as one of the most bizarre Speccy games to ever find a release.

Benny Hill's Madcap Chase finds Benny offering to do some chores for his neighbours – we can only assume he's on some kind of community service scheme for perpetual panty-raiding – and the game is split into three sections. The first finds Benny trying to retrieve washing from one end of a level and take it to the laundry basket sitting at the other, which sounds simple enough, but a frumpy woman believes he's up to his old tricks, and if he gets caught in possession of some underpants she will viciously jump on his spine with her stilettos. The remaining two stages, while enjoyable, are not as humorous, and find Benny harvesting apples while avoiding a demented farmer and collecting jumble while evading police officers.

Perhaps the best thing about *Benny Hill's Madcap Chase* is just how great it looks, with the Benny Hill sprite looking just like he did on the telly. Add several nice little touches, such as Benny's humorous collisions with scenery and the way the game warns you whenever one of the enemies was on the warpath, and while there may not be much to it, you soon realise that it does a pretty impressive job of adapting the show into a computer game.


SCORE
000



» It's a mixed bag this month, as we play the latest *Virtua Tennis* update and a stunning remake of Namco's *Klonoa*. Oh, and let's not forget the fantastic *Fate Of Atlantis*, which is free with *Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings*.

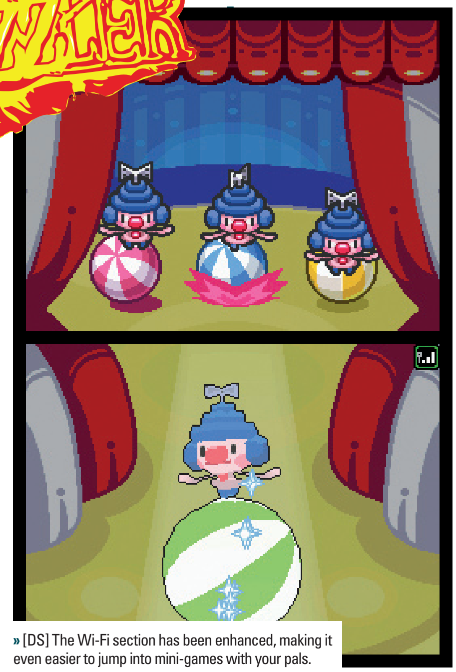
» POKÉMON PLATINUM

retro GAMER SIZZLER

DS



» [DS] If you're a newcomer to *Pokémon, Platinum*, despite it being the last in the fourth generation of handheld games, explains the gameplay brilliantly.



» [DS] The Wi-Fi section has been enhanced, making it even easier to jump into mini-games with your pals.

Pokémon Platinum

POKÉMON'S BACK TO HAVING MORE FUN WITH THE PERIODIC TABLE

INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** DS
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £34.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** GAME FREAK
- » **PLAYERS:** 1

BRIEF HISTORY

» *Pokémon* (a portmanteau of Pocket Monsters) was the brainchild of Satoshi Tajiri. Tajiri enjoyed collecting insects as a kid, and after starting up Game Freak and finding a partner in Nintendo, he brought his passion to the Game Boy with the release of *Pokémon Red* and *Green* in 1996.

✱ WHY NOT TRY

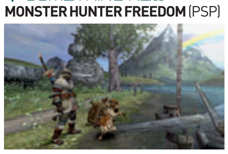
▽ SOMETHING OLD

POKÉMON RED (GBC)



▽ SOMETHING NEW

MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM (PSP)





The Pokémon series, notable for making turn-based and random battles enjoyable, is ridiculously popular the world over. Pokémon Platinum has now landed on DS, and it's absolutely brilliant.

Now, we should all be well-versed on the Pokémon formula by now. Even those who haven't played the game should be aware that *Pokémon* is a top-down *Zelda*-esque adventure about capturing and battling pocket-sized monsters, acquiring gym badges, and levelling up and trafficking virtual creatures to your friends. It's simple, wonderfully addictive and very easy to get to grips with.

This latest *Platinum* version uses the popular DS *Diamond* and *Pearl* versions as a basis for its setting and story, which themselves were two awesomely good *Pokémon* outings. This strange trilogy release pattern is one that the handheld canon has always followed, in that *Emerald*, *Crystal* and *Yellow* were the third games in their respective series. The third game tends to always be a refinement of the trio, and *Platinum* is no different.

With a new story, gameplay, and multiplayer features, plus over 50 more Pokémon to catch and train, there's plenty for fans to sink their teeth into. However, with a story based on the same characters and locations as the first two DS titles (but with the addition of Distortion World) there's no question that those who have already battled through both *Diamond* and *Pearl* will feel a strong sense of déjà vu when playing through the game.

Still, veteran *Pokémon* fans know how the franchise works, and those new to the series will actually find *Platinum* surprisingly good at taking new trainers through the ropes and settling them into what the series has to offer. Actually, if you've yet to play a *Pokémon* game, we recommend you seek out *Platinum*. It's a solid, enjoyable doorway into the series and we just can't put it down.

OPINION



I agree with Stuart. While the game is polished and very addictive, I just wish Game Freak had put a little more effort into making *Platinum* feel like the ultimate handheld Pokémon game. As it is, it's brilliant but doesn't quite reach the heady heights that I was hoping for.

Darran Jones

In a nutshell

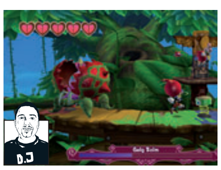
The addictive *Platinum* is a great Pokémon title. And while the new elements it brings are welcome, a few more to really separate it from the earlier *Diamond* and *Pearl* outings wouldn't have gone amiss – the games are two years apart, after all.

» Scores

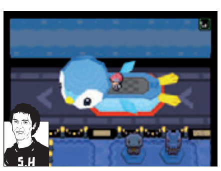
Presentation	89%
Graphics	80%
Sound	89%
Playability	94%
Addictivity	90%

Overall 90%

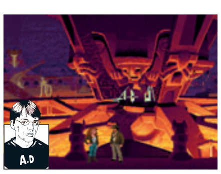
✱ PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN
Klonoa
A truly astonishing remake that makes you feel all happy inside whenever you play it.



STUART
Pokémon Platinum
It's still lacking in places, but at the end of the day *Pokémon Platinum* is still fantastic stuff.



ASHLEY
Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis
One of the most enjoyable LucasArts yarns ever made.

Simon The Sorcerer II

THE OLD MAGIC'S BACK AGAIN

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PC » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** $5.99 » **PUBLISHER:** GOG.COM » **DEVELOPER:** ADVENTURE SOFT » **PLAYERS:** 1



After being bowled over with last month's Simon The Sorcerer, we've spent most of our spare time this issue getting stuck into the sequel. Sadly, while it offers many improvements over the original, it's let down by the fact that main character Simon is damned annoying and lacks the charm so abundant in the first game. Chris Barrie is nowhere to be seen, voice-over duties instead falling to Brian Bowles. He takes a fair stab at it, but can't beat Barrie's excellent comic timing. As a result, one of the most charming aspects of the original game is totally ruined.

Having said that, there is still plenty to enjoy with this often amusing sequel and it doesn't suffer from some of the annoying puzzles that appeared in the original. It also features a far cleaner interface and a more in-depth plot that offers numerous of twists and turns while introducing plenty of new memorable characters. Filled with pop-culture references and amusing moments, *Simon The Sorcerer II* is a solid sequel. The only real sticking point is that its lead character is very difficult to like. If you can get past this, you'll find a clever and often charming adventure that's not quite as polished as the original, but still well worth playing.

In a nutshell

Yes it's funny and in many ways improves upon the original, but it's not quite up to the same high standard. It's definitely worth a download, though, if you've already completed part one.

» Scores

Presentation	85%
Graphics	80%
Sound	87%
Playability	80%
Addictivity	74%
Overall	**79%**

PC



» [PC] Humour, while not up to the standards of the original, is still good.



OPINION



I've really been enjoying this, especially as I actually missed it the first time around. It's not quite up to the standards of *Monkey Island*, but it's extremely humorous in places and is definitely worth downloading if you're a fan of the point-and-click genre.

Stuart Hunt

XBLA



Wolfenstein 3D

» **SYSTEM:** XBOX LIVE ARCADE
» **PRICE:** 400 » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **After getting stuck** into last month's fun but flawed iPhone port, we've found ourselves hopelessly addicted to Nerve's Xbox Live offering. The graphics no longer impress – although they remain amazingly fast and smooth – and the lack of a map makes some of the later levels a real bitch to play through, but *Wolfenstein's* gameplay remains a thing of greatness, even if it is a little simplistic.

» Score **85%**

XBLA



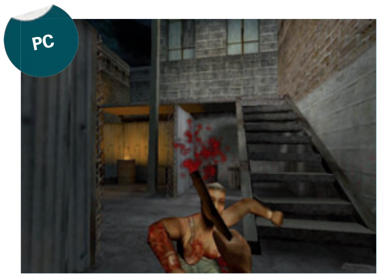
Virtual On: Oratorio Tangram

» **SYSTEM:** XBOX LIVE ARCADE
» **PRICE:** 1,200 » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

» **We were worried** that the 360 pad wouldn't be cut out for *Virtual On* and sadly we were right. This is a great port of the DC conversion and looks incredible with its hi-def sheen, but the 360's analogue stick just doesn't do the game justice. It still plays well and bouts can be extremely satisfying, but it's not as good as it could have been.

» Score **72%**

PC



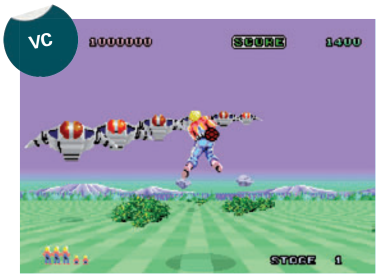
Kingpin: Life Of Crime

» **SYSTEM:** PC
» **PRICE:** $5.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1+

» **Kingpin has aged** surprisingly well over the last decade. The graphics still look good, the story remains gritty and entertaining, while the carefully paced combat means it doesn't turn into a bland frag-fest like so many of its peers. It's not for the squeamish, but if you can get past the gore and swearing, you'll find a solid blaster.

» Score **70%**

VC



Space Harrier

» **SYSTEM:** VIRTUAL CONSOLE
» **PRICE:** 800 POINTS » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **24 long years** after its release, *Space Harrier* remains one of the best into-the-screen blasters money can buy. Fast and furious and with a soundtrack that's oh-so glorious, it remains an incredibly polished blaster that's still a complete joy to play. Sure, it gets repetitive, but if you're looking for a genuinely thrilling arcade experience, nothing else on Virtual Console comes anywhere near it.

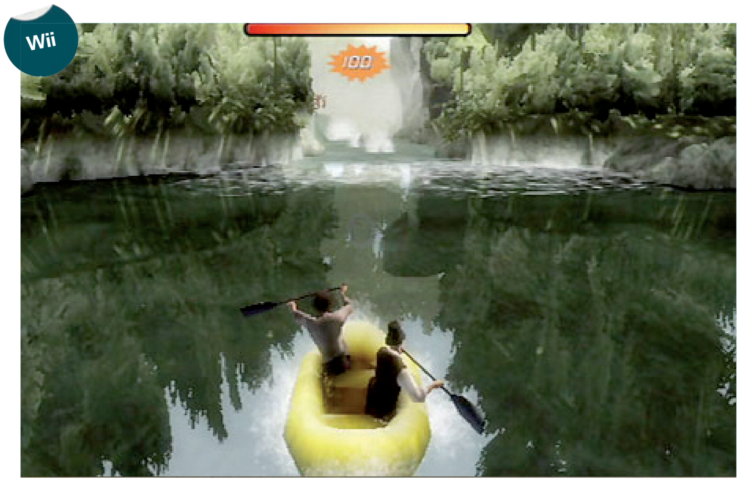
» Score **88%**

» INDIANA JONES AND THE STAFF OF KINGS

Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings

THE MAN WITH THE HAT IS BACK

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** Wii » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PSP, DS, PS2 » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £34.99 » **PUBLISHER:** LUCASARTS » **DEVELOPER:** A2M » **PLAYERS:** 1-2



» [Wii] In addition to *Fate Of Atlantis*, Wii owners also get a co-op game included.

Well, the good news is that Indiana Jones And The Staff Of Kings is not the travesty early reports have suggested. The bad news is that it's still not the great Indy game we were hoping for.

Sure the music's all there, your on-screen avatar even looks and sounds like Harrison Ford… sort of, and there are plenty of classic 'Indy moments', but it still doesn't feel like a proper Indiana Jones game.

Among the more significant problems that we found with *Staff Of Kings* was the fact that it feels rushed. Certain sections lack the polish you would expect from a big-budget title and show little or no thought, while much of the level design is plain lazy. In many ways it's similar to *Rygar* in that it seems happy to just ignore all the advancements that have been made to the third-person adventure over the last five years.



It's not all bad news, though. The included *Gears Of War*-styled shoot-outs are nicely done; the puzzles, which are a little too easy, capture the spirit of the original movies; and the combat is tremendous fun. Punches are thrown with a subtle twist of the Wii Remote or Nunchuk and environments can be interacted with for maximum damage, while disarming an enemy or dragging him to the ground with your whip is immensely satisfying. Oh, and LucasArts has kindly included *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis* on the Wii version so make sure you pick that one up.

OPINION

Yes it feels unloved and in need of attention and yes it's painfully short – six hours is plenty of time to complete it – but we've still enjoyed Indy's latest adventure. Just make sure you pick up the Wii version because the motion controls really add to the overall experience.

Stuart Hunt

» Scores

Presentation	84%
Graphics	70%
Sound	82%
Playability	65%
Addictivity	62%

Overall 62%



» [Wii] The Wii Remote works brilliantly. Let's hope LucasArts opens up more of its back catalogue.

Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis

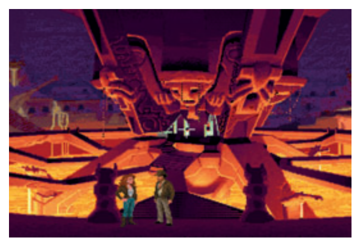
A PRETTY SUBSTANTIAL SIDE DISH

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** Wii » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** FREE (SORT OF) » **PUBLISHER:** LUCASARTS » **DEVELOPER:** LUCASARTS » **PLAYERS:** 1

Given away free with the Wii version of Staff Of Kings, this is such a fantastic conversion of Fate Of Atlantis that we felt it deserved a review all of its own.

Basically, for those not aware, *Fate Of Atlantis* sees Indy searching for the fabled City of Atlantis. Along the way, he battles Nazis, teams up with a feisty sidekick, and proves that when it came to point-and-click adventures during the Nineties, LucasArts was an untouchable entity.

This is the full talkie version of the hit game, and while the speech is a little out of synch with the on-screen action, it adds immeasurably to the tight, often funny script and ensures that even the most minor characters are fully fleshed out. Other than this minor niggle, this is an otherwise excellent conversion that makes excellent use of the Wii's Remote controller. It even rumbles when you find hotspots.



There's a choice of three different graphic filters to choose from, the music sounds as good as it ever did and the two-dimensional locations still look absolutely fantastic. Ultimately, however, it's the adventure itself that makes *Fate Of Atlantis* such a wonderful experience thanks to its variety of play modes, quirky roster of characters, and the way that it captures the spirit of the original movies so effortlessly.

The fact that this has been given away with a perfectly enjoyable (if rather underwhelming) Indy game is nothing less than criminal.

OPINION

It's rather telling that in the last 17 years no other Indiana Jones game has ever matched the brilliance of *Fate Of Atlantis*. So all you have to decide now is whether it's worth spending £35 to get it. We'd say 'hell yes', but then we love *Fate Of Atlantis*.

Stuart Hunt

» Scores

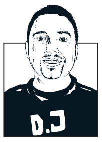
Presentation	90%
Graphics	85%
Sound	88%
Playability	96%
Addictivity	95%

Overall 95%

Super Smash Bros

NOT THE KNOCK-OUT WE WERE EXPECTING

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** VIRTUAL CONSOLE » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW » **PRICE:** 1,000 POINTS » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO » **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO/HAL



Super Smash Bros is nowhere near as good as it used to be. There, we've said it, and we feel guilty and dirty for doing so, but the unfortunate thing is that it's the truth. Now, don't get us wrong, it still plays really well and the visuals and audio quality haven't diminished with time, but when you compare this to its two sequels it just feels… well, empty.

The roster of characters is minuscule compared with the later games, there's very little to unlock, and the levels lack the imagination that the more recent sequels can boast, meaning that once you've completed the main game there's very little to drag you back to it… unless of course you have three friends to hand at all times.

Now, some gamers out there will no doubt argue that we should be ignoring the later sequels and assessing *Super Smash Bros* more on its own individual merits, but when you consider the fact that the GameCube version of the game can be picked up for the same price and is perfectly playable on the same console, it becomes mighty difficult to recommend this latest Virtual Console release.

Super Smash Bros is still great fun and a perfectly entertaining game, but Nintendo and HAL Laboratory have transformed the franchise immeasurably over the last couple of years. By all means download it if you harbour fond memories of the original game, but don't come crying to **Retro Gamer** if you find yourselves completely bored of it a little sooner than you expected.

» Scores

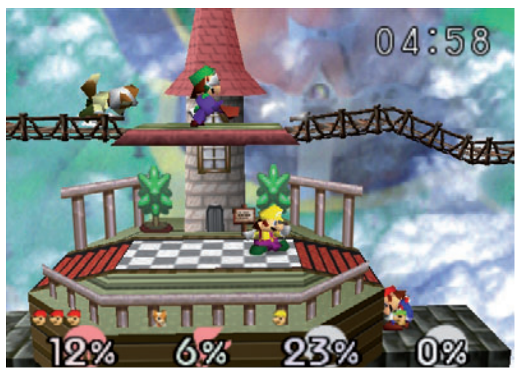
Presentation	**70%**
Graphics	**82%**
Sound	**85%**
Playability	**88%**
Addictivity	**75%**

Overall 83%

VC



» [VC] *Donkey Kong's* home is a great stage to fight on and the music is ace as well.



OPINION



I don't actually agree with Darran on this one. Yes it's definitely lacking in features, and only the multiplayer mode will keep dragging you back, but at the end of the day the core magic is still there, and to me, that's all that really matters.

Stuart Hunt

PC



Die By The Sword

» **SYSTEM:** PC
» **PRICE:** $5.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **We really rather** enjoyed *Die By The Sword* when it was first released. However, the years have not been kind. Camera angles constantly annoy, the innovative mouse controls simply don't work as well as they should, and the excess gore just seems silly now. Fans may squeeze some enjoyment out of it, and the price point is certainly sound, but the genre itself has long since moved on. Avoid.

» Score **51%**

XBLA



Gunstar Heroes

» **SYSTEM:** XBOX LIVE ARCADE
» **PRICE:** 400 POINTS » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

» **It costs roughly** £40 for a PAL copy of the original *Gunstar Heroes*, so this Live Arcade effort with its co-op play and Achievements represents a massive bargain. *Gunstar Heroes* is easily Treasure's greatest Mega Drive game and it still plays brilliantly today. Fast and furious visuals, scintillating music and some amazing bosses all combine to create the best run-and-gun currently available on Live Arcade.

» Score **93%**

Wii



Rainbow Islands: Towering Adventure

» **SYSTEM:** WiiWARE
» **PRICE:** 800 POUNDS » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

» **Every time we** play a new *Rainbow Islands* game it ends in disappointment. This latest spin on the franchise is no different and while it introduces some new mechanics, it's so devoid of character, you'll wish you downloaded the superior *Bubble Bobble Plus*. A lazy sequel that only serves to highlight how amazing the original still is.

» Score **33%**

PSN



Bejeweled 2

» **SYSTEM:** PLAYSTATION NETWORK
» **PRICE:** £7.19 » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **After dominating virtually** every platform it's appeared on, PopCap's *Bejeweled 2* finally heads to Sony's PlayStation network. It's still a great little puzzle game, but, not surprisingly, the analogue stick is no match for a mouse or your finger, and on higher difficulty levels *Bejeweled 2* just becomes far too frustrating to play. Do yourself a favour and stick with the PC version instead.

» Score **70%**

» VIRTUA TENNIS 2009



» [Xbox 360] As always the players look frghtfully realistic.



HERE WE GO AGAIN

Virtua Tennis 2009



With summer finally here it's becoming increasingly difficult to spend time cooped up indoors playing computer games. Videogames suit rainy-day scenarios brilliantly. However, arcade games – in particular those from the Sega stable – always feel like they should be played outdoors in swimming shorts and a beer hat. One such title that fits that bill is the latest in the Virtua Tennis series, a game that is so cheery and bright that it could conceivably be hawked as a treatment for SAD suffers.

Virtua Tennis 2009 remains in the hands of Sumo Digital who have been ably handling Sega's tennis series since *Virtua Tennis World Tour* in 2005. For a long while, *Virtua Tennis* was the quintessential sports series for tennis aficionados, and in terms of its accessibility, it still can't be touched – something it prides itself on by purposely distancing itself from the depth and control found in its long-time 2K tennis rival, *Top Spin*.

That *Virtua Tennis*'s roots are firmly embedded in arcade gaming is certainly one of its draws, but it comes as a double-edged sword to the series because very little ever seems to ever be tweaked or added to the *Virtua Tennis* formula, for fears (we suspect) that the game may one day become too technical and lose its arcade feel. Very little separates this title from last year's *Virtua Tennis 3*, but fresh features include a new create-a-player function; those over-the-top wild dives have been replaced with wild stretches; several new tennis players (most notably Mr Chuckles himself, Andy Murray) have been added; the Davis Cup is in there, plus new online rankings and a few more mini-games. Considering the giant strides in control, visuals, and options made between *Top Spin 2* and *3*, however we struggle to see why you'd need to get this if you already own that game.

However, on its own merits, *Virtua Tennis 2009* stands as an enjoyable and entertaining game of tennis. The gameplay still flows effortlessly, the returns and controls still feel solid, and the rallies succeed in being both satisfying and tense, making criticising the game too harshly quite difficult. So we're completely flummoxed by this one.

In a nutshell

In terms of an arcade tennis game, you'll find no better. However, if you shelled out for the last game, there's a strong chance you might feel disappointed by the lack of new features and visual improvements.

INFORMATION

- **FEATURED SYSTEM:** XBOX 360
- **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PLAYSTATION 3, Wii, PC
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PRICE:** £44.99
- **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **DEVELOPER:** SUMO DIGITAL
- **PLAYERS:** 1-4

BRIEF HISTORY

» Running from Sega's NAOMI board, Sega served an ace when it released *Virtua Tennis* in arcades in 1999. The game, originally developed by AM3, has now been handed over to Sheffield-based developer Sumo Digital, which has worked hard to help craft the franchise into a popular tennis series for console owners.

OPINION



Virtua Tennis still plays a great game of tennis. However, it feels too similar to the last iteration. So, how do you improve on such a brilliant sports game? It's a great, arcadey title, it's just lacking a little something. But I'll be buggered if I know what that something is.

Darran Jones

★ GO DEEPER

The facts behind Virtua Tennis 2009

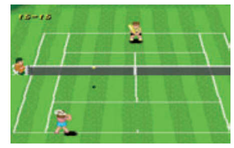
» The Wii version of the game is compatible with the Wii MotionPlus sensor technology.

» Sega has also secured the licence for the Davis Cup for inclusion in the game.

★ WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD

SUPER TENNIS [SNES]



▽ SOMETHING NEW

TOP SPIN 3 [360]



» Scores

Presentation	73%
Graphics	74%
Sound	40%
Playability	89%
Addictivity	85%

Overall 75%

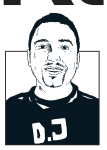


» [Wii] The level design is as good as ever and looks particularly pleasing with the updated visuals.



A WiiMAKE THAT PUSHES ALL THE RIGHT BUTTONS

Klonoa



With all the licensed tat currently available on Wii, it's becoming increasingly difficult for smaller games to get a fair look in. With this in mind, please, please, please seek out this wonderful platformer from Namco and Paon Corp.

Namco could have simply ported the brilliant but underrated original and we'd have been more than happy – it really is that good. Instead the original director has been brought back in and allowed to rebuild the game from the ground up, offering a host of graphical tweaks like fully three-dimensional rendered models that still look as cute as their original pixelated counterparts. The end result is a truly gorgeous looking game that easily eclipses the already impressive looking PlayStation 2 sequel and adds plenty of other bells and whistles to create an essential update of a cult classic. Backgrounds have been completely redrawn, music remastered, new English voices have been included – although the original gibbery voices still remain – a new move has been thrown in and a host of bonuses, including costumes and an excellent Mirror mode have been added once you complete the game.

Even without the myriad touches that Paon Corp has included for this reboot, *Klonoa* would still be an amazing game, simply because the platforming itself is as excellent as it was in 1997. Granted, it's short, but it's so beautifully crafted and well designed that you'll constantly find yourself being pulled back to it even when you have completed it for the tenth time. Playing *Klonoa* is like discovering a rare flower in a patch of weeds, or even like finding that proverbial needle in a haystack. This delightful game will hopefully reach a brand new audience thanks to its accessible gameplay, wealth of control choices and meticulously crafted level design.

Certain people will no doubt moan that all Namco has done is put out a quick and easy port, but that couldn't be further from the truth. Even if you've played the excellent original, you'll discover plenty of innovative little tricks and nuances. *Klonoa* is nothing less than a complete joy to play and a must own for any platform fan.

INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** Wii
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £19.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** NAMCO BANDAI
- » **DEVELOPER:** PAON CORP
- » **PLAYERS:** 1

BRIEF HISTORY

» There have been a total of eight *Klonoa* games since *Door To Phantomville* first appeared on Sony's PlayStation. *Klonoa Beach Volleyball* is notable for being the only sports game *Klonoa* has appeared in, while *Klonoa Heroes* was an action RPG instead of a platformer.

OPINION



I have fond memories of the PlayStation original, but this Wiiboot is even better. Additional levels (thanks to the unlockable Mirror Vision mode) gorgeous visuals and that same sublime gameplay all combine to create a simply unforgettable platformer that constantly delivers. An essential purchase.

Stuart Hunt

★ GO DEEPER

The facts behind Klonoa

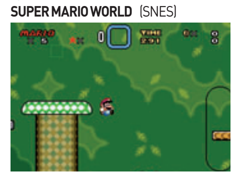
» **The original *Klonoa* was one of the first games to feature two-dimensional characters on a three-dimensional background.**

» **The cute flying cat has had cameos in *Alpine Racer, Moto GP* and *Namco X Capcom*.**

★ WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD

SUPER MARIO WORLD (SNES)



▽ SOMETHING NEW

SUPER MARIO GALAXY (Wii)



In a nutshell

Don't be fooled into thinking that this is just a creaky update of an old classic, because this version of *Klonoa* is an essential update that mixes brand new visuals with some of the best level design ever. Quite simply unmissable.

» Scores

Presentation	85%
Graphics	90%
Sound	93%
Playability	93%
Addictivity	94%
Overall	**92%**

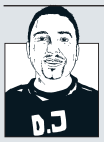
MOBILERETRO

» MOBILE ROUND-UP

Zenonia

DON'T REGRET A THING

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE » **PRICE:** £3.49 » **GET IT FROM:** iTunes



Honestly, you wait ages for a decent dungeon hack to hit the iPhone, and then two come along at once. Following on from last month's impressive *Underworlds*, *Zenonia* ups the ante by adding an in-depth storyline, genuinely amusing characters and beautiful cartoony graphics to the mix.

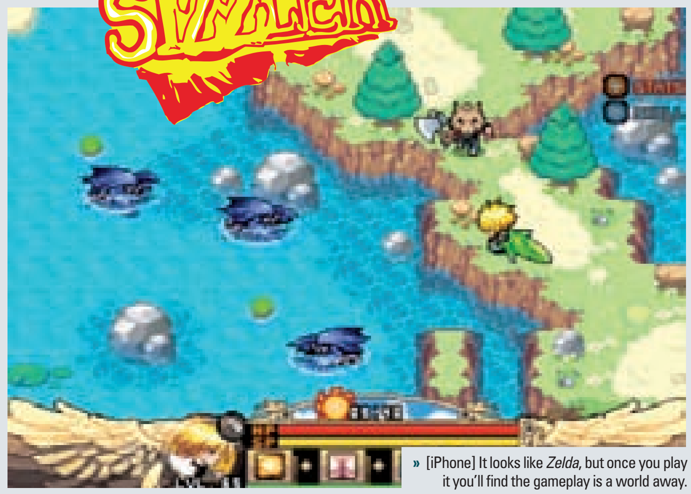
Initially *Zenonia* appears to be an iPhone riff on *A Link to the Past*, but once you look beyond the similar visuals, you'll discover an amazingly deep game that has more in common with the likes of *Diablo* and *World Of Warcraft* than it does with anything set in the land of Hyrule.

Faced with a choice of three different character classes, you're quickly thrust into a world of poorly worded but still funny English, level grinding, and countless quests. Combat works brilliantly, with the hero, Regret, intelligently changing direction in order to battle new foes, while an in-depth skill tree allows you to really flesh out your portable hero. Food needs to be consumed, weapons eventually break and must be replaced, while the numerous characters you meet have plenty of memorable and humorous anecdotes to impart.

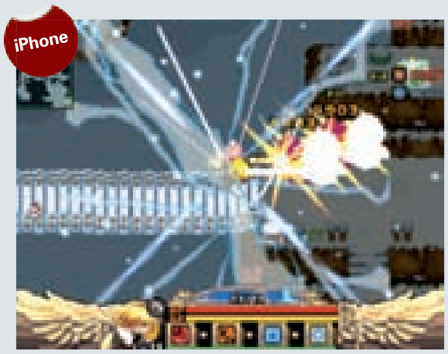
Boasting 40 hours of gameplay and plenty of twists and turns, *Zenonia* is an epic title that we'd have been happy to pay £30 for on DS. The fact it's a mere tenth of the price makes it one of the best bargains ever.

» Scores

Presentation	96%
Graphics	95%
Sound	88%
Playability	95%
Addictivity	92%
Overall	**95%**



» [iPhone] It looks like *Zelda*, but once you play it you'll find the gameplay is a world away.



iPhone

OPINION

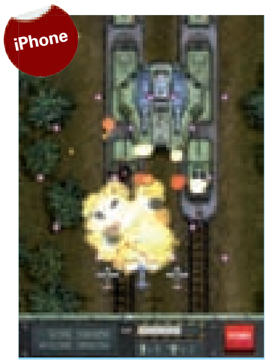


We're certainly being spoiled at the moment. Ignore the cute look, because underneath lies an incredibly tough yet always rewarding dungeon hack. Epic in scope, it's easily the best example of the genre that we've played on Apple's machine. Highly recommended.

Stuart Hunt

iFighter

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE » **PRICE:** 59p
» **GET IT FROM:** ITUNES



iPhone

» **A huge number** of shoot'-em-ups have started to appear on the iPhone recently, and while *iFighter* isn't quite up to the high standards of GameLoft's *Siberian Strike*, it's nevertheless a solid little blaster. While the controls work very well thanks to a little virtual joystick, you can occasionally slip off it, leaving your ship dangerously exposed. The bigger issue, however, is the dull, sedate pace, which is obviously meant to give you a fighting chance with the controls, but doesn't make for an exciting blaster. It's a fun little shooter, especially for the price, but *Siberian Strike* does the same thing a whole lot better.

» Score **63%**

Critter Crunch

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE » **PRICE:** 59p
» **GET IT FROM:** ITUNES



iPhone

» **Fans of *Puzzle*** *Bobble*, *Pang* and *Baku Baku Animal* would do well to check out *Critter Crunch*, as it successfully manages to mix elements from all three games. Using simple left-and-right or up-and-down swipes, you have to capture the cute critters with your tongue, then flick them back to even bigger meanies. Do this enough times and the sated beast will explode, hopefully creating a chain that will net you even more precious points. It's an amazingly simple concept that works brilliantly thanks to tightly designed controls and solid gameplay mechanics. A must for puzzle fans.

» Score **83%**

Flashback

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE » **PRICE:** £1.79
» **GET IT FROM:** ITUNES



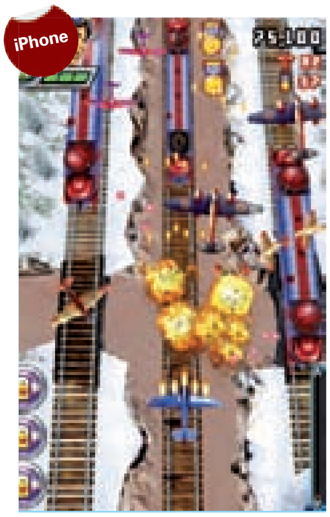
iPhone

» **Now, we're huge** fans of *Flashback*, but all this weak port does is confirm to cynical gamers that the iPhone simply isn't up to translating certain classic videogames. It's a wonderful looking game and Conrad's adventures look fantastic on the machine's diminutive screen. However, *Flashback* is hampered by one of the most frustrating controls systems we've ever come across. It's far too easy for Conrad to get obscured by your thumb, and the actual controls are nowhere near as responsive as they need to be. *Flashback* is a superb game, but we'll be amazed if newer gamers can be bothered to get past its fiddly interface.

» Score **51%**

Siberian Strike

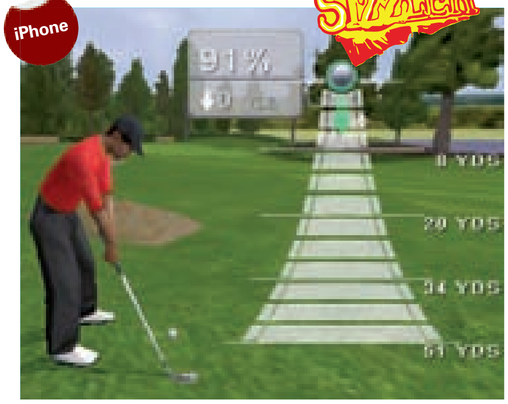
» **SYSTEM:** iPHONE » **PRICE:** 59p
» **GET IT FROM:** iTUNES



» **It's certainly a** good month for shoot-'em-up fans this issue. Like *iFighter*, *Siberian Strike* is a vertical, 59p shooter. However, it inches ahead thanks to its far superior visuals, excellent controls and a much nippier pace.

To control your ship you must simply dragging it around the screen while a second finger charges up your sub-weapon (you constantly fire like many iPhone shooters). Unlike *Flashback*, you never seem to obscure the on-screen action, while the fluid controls make dodging the many on-screen bullets a cinch… well, at least it does on the early stages). *Siberian Strike* is an essential blaster for fans of the genre.

» Score **82%**



Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09

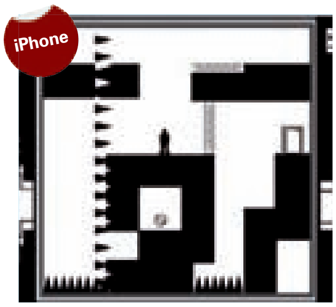
» **SYSTEM:** iPHONE » **PRICE:** £5.99
» **GET IT FROM:** iTUNES

» **Forget the price**, this is an essential purchase for golf fans. While the visuals and the included courses look excellent, the real brilliance of *Tiger Woods* is its wonderful swing system. A simple up-and-down swipe of your finger takes a shot, but every little nuance is taken into account, even affecting things like draw and fade. It's a wonderfully intuitive system that allows you to pull off a range of delicate shots. The lack of a proper multiplayer mode or online play is a drag, but *Tiger Woods* remains one of the best golf games we've played on any handheld. Ever.

» Score **93%**

Shift

» **SYSTEM:** iPHONE » **PRICE:** 59p
» **GET IT FROM:** iTUNES

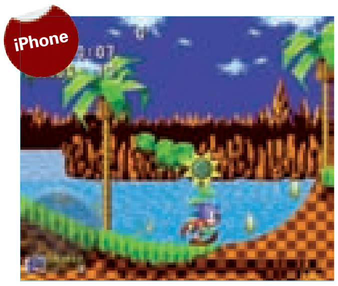


» **Shift was first** released via Flash and is now available for a ridiculously cheap 59p. The game has lost nothing in its translation to Apple's iPhone. Every single-screen black-and-white puzzle simply requires you to get to the exit. However, to do so you have to constantly invert the colours, allowing you to access otherwise unreachable sections. Needless to say there's an incredible amount of head scratching involved on the later levels, but it's put together with so much skill and polish you'll find yourself unable to put it down. Add in an elegant control system and *Shift* becomes essential.

» Score **88%**

Sonic The Hedgehog

» **SYSTEM:** iPHONE » **PRICE:** £3.49
» **GET IT FROM:** iTUNES



» **Oh dear, what** on earth has happened? Sonic the Hedgehog is famous throughout the world for his speed and agility, but you'd never guess it by playing this stuttery port. While the controls themselves are perfectly adequate, the constantly fluctuating frame rate makes certain stages a real pig to negotiate. It's a real annoyance as the Mega Drive version has been otherwise lovingly replicated and looks absolutely glorious on the small screen, but the ropey emulation and sheer lack of thought – the bonus stages would have been perfect for Accelerometer control – means that unless an update comes along, this is best left alone.

» Score **60%**

CHATTER BOX

» Want to know a little more about this issue's game of the month? Well, here's *Zenonia*'s project manager, **Yong Hee Jung**, to make things a little clearer for you...



Where did the concept for Zenonia originate?
The Greek meaning of 'zenon' is 'stranger'. This suits the main hero, Regret, perfectly as everyone doubts, avoids and betrays him after the death of his father. Our main aim was to create a sensational RPG for the Korean market that was realistic. The characters should move slowly if the bag is heavy; feel hungry if he hasn't eaten anything and so on. Another thing that we focused on was the so-called 'taste of attacking'. Even though it is a simple hack-and-slash, we wanted it to be a really fun experience that felt good to play.

How long has it taken to create, and how many people were working on it?
It took us a year and half to develop this game. There were 13 people in total involved.

What's the biggest issue you've had to tackle from a programming point of view?
Expressing the script was one of the most challenging things. Depending on the scene, we created more than 50 samples in order to make the perfect cut.

Will there be any updates (side quests and so on) available in the future?
There will be updates, but the scope of it is still under internal discussion at the moment. We are done with our 1.1 update, which will be minor updates, and are currently working on our 1.2 update. The original development team has already been developing the sequel for months, so please look forward to this in 2010.

It's a lot cuter than other Diablo-style hack-'em-ups. Was there any particular reason for going down this route?
We believed this made for an easier and more user-friendly approach. The original concept was to make it look classic, too. Everyone has that moment when they remember playing games with big heads back in the days. This is a very popular style in Korea, as it is in Japan.

HOMEBREW

» The scene's latest news and reviews



There's lots of lovely homebrew to look at this time, most of which seems to be out to prove that games don't need complex stories or cut-scenes to be good. Titles like r0x on the Atari STE or Lazer Grazer and the remake of Omega Race for the PC are all gaming at its simplest but seriously worth the time they'll take to play.



» [Atari STE] Maximum power!





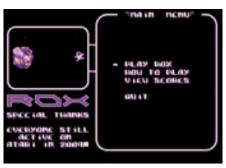
» [Atari STE] You go that way; I'll go home!



» [Atari STE] Not a particularly good score…

ROX

BOLDLY GOING WHERE NO STE HOMEBREW HAS GONE BEFORE!



FORMAT: ATARI STE
DEVELOPED BY: HEAVY STYLUS AND TOMCHI
LINK: WWW.RGCD.CO.UK/ROX/
RELEASE DATE: 2009
PRICE: FREE
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

Life aboard the starship Irata isn't particularly good right now. A series of human and system errors are turning what should have been an uneventful journey home from battle in suspended animation into a nightmare for the ship's commander. Power reserves have been drained to emergency levels because some idiot left a dodgy 3D video running, and apparently the protocol for these situations is to dump expendable personnel – the ones wearing red jumpers, no doubt – and pull life support back to the bare minimum. The upshot of this is that only the commander remains; the crew are floating alive but unconscious in open space, and, as if that wasn't bad enough, there's a huge meteor storm heading straight towards the ship.

It's at that point we join the beleaguered commander on the bridge of his command as he orders that everything left with power be switched to manual control. Despite being a military frigate, the Irata hasn't been left with enough power to use its weaponry apart from a very limited stock of smart bombs, meaning that the only real option for survival is to weave through the asteroids. The only positive side to this situation is that it's not just plain rocks to dodge: some are jewel-encrusted and worth a few credits and there are power-ups floating around to grab, with the positive ones dishing out extra ships or smart bombs and the negative taking lives away or temporarily reversing the controls. And, most importantly, the Irata's former crew are stuck out there, waiting to be rescued by you.

The game's own instructions declare *r0x* to be a simple game, but that certainly doesn't mean it's not enjoyable. The difficulty curve moves in waves, reaching a crescendo at the end of each stage, then falling back as the next begins, only to rise even further as it progresses to give natural breaks in the otherwise fast-paced action. Bravery is rewarded, with score being given for saving floating spacemen and taking the risk of grabbing a blinged-up asteroid, or those with keen eyes can risk grazing against the otherwise deadly meteors since that's worth points as well. There's also the option for two players to compete against each other, collecting as many of the stranded crew members as they can, with the winner either being the first to 20 or, if both players are destroyed prior to that point, the one saving the most.

Developers TomChi, Templeton, Crazy_Q, DMA-SC and Heavy Stylus have pushed the boat out quite a distance cosmetically, and *r0x* really requires the Atari STE with 2Mb in its specifications to run, because it's using the memory and extra hardware quite a bit. There are a lot of large objects cannoning around the play area, the jolly piece of in-game chip music is accompanied by sampled speech and effects, and the overall package is presented well. 16-bit homebrew games are few and far between, with action titles being even rarer still, so it's great to see such a well-presented and playable one.

86%

NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at:
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

WASP! REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** ATARI 7800 » **DEVELOPER:** MARK BALL
» **DOWNLOAD:** TINYURL.COM/PZURY7 » **PRICE:** FREE

Everybody loves a fry-up, so when our protagonist awakens to find bacon, eggs and sausages but no mushrooms in his fridge, he decides to go foraging in a nearby forest – but he wasn't counting on a nest of extremely territorial wasps! Okay, we made that nonsense up, but there wasn't an official story provided by the author.

Originally written as a test, *Wasp!* evolved into a single-screen action game that is very simple but still a giggle to play. Wasps move around similarly to the real deal, with individuals pausing before darting towards the player and small swarms occasionally forming. There's no increase in difficulty between levels, so the only reason to keep playing is learning how the wasps 'think' and then using that knowledge against them in order to get more tasty fungal treats, but that's fun in itself, so *Wasp!* is worth a download for the hour or two it'll fill.

72%



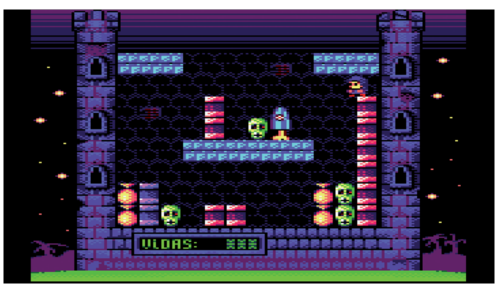


» [Atari 7800] Every step you take, every move you make.

NANAKO IN CLASSIC JAPANESE MONSTER CASTLE REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK



» [CPC] Getting dangerously close to hentai territory.



» **FORMAT:** AMSTRAD CPC » **DEVELOPER:** THE MOJON TWINS
» **DOWNLOAD:** TINYURL.COM/PTSEKO » **PRICE:** FREE

The Mojon Twins' rather scantily clad heroine Nanako is currently the star of two adventures, and, just to confuse things slightly, this second Amstrad CPC release, *Nanako In Classic Japanese Monster Castle*, is actually her original outing that was previously only available for the Spectrum.

Nanako needs to be guided to the top of each screen while avoiding the roaming creatures, but she can't jump particularly high so has to rely either on her magical powers to pick up and drop boxes to build makeshift stairways, or occasionally balance on a monster's head to get a little extra height.

Each screen contains enough boxes to complete, so the challenge comes from working out the optimal solution. *Classic Japanese Monster Castle* is a puzzle game at heart, with platform overtones that offer players a chance to exercise a few grey cells and their reactions simultaneously.

82%

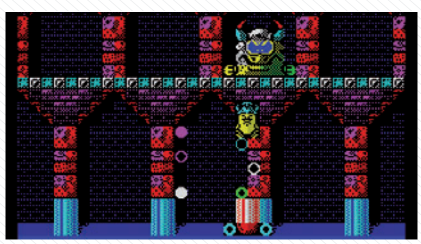
GOMMY: MEDIEVAL DEFENDER REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** SPECTRUM » **DEVELOPER:** RETROWORKS
» **DOWNLOAD:** TINYURL.COM/OX8Y65 » **RELEASE DATE:** 2009 » **PRICE:** FREE

Gommy, clad in armour and perched atop Gommyland Castle, scanned the horizon for attackers. He knew they would arrive soon, but despite being alone after his comrades mysteriously vanished, he wasn't defenceless; he'd planned ahead and accrued a supply of boulders with which to smite the invading marauders!

The game itself sees Gommy standing on top of the castle with enemies clambering up the brickwork below. He moves horizontally and can pick up and throw rocks, and the walls have obstructions that must be taken into consideration when throwing projectiles. It can be immensely satisfying when a shot knocks a climber for six, and the boss battle, where Gommy is launched from a cannon, is highly amusing, fitting well with the cartoony feel of what is a fun action game.

77%

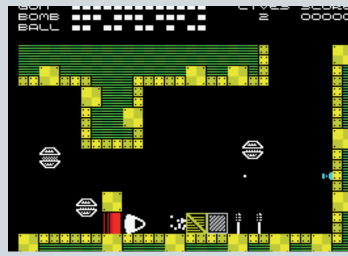


» [ZX Spectrum] Gommy's really going up in the world!



WHAT'S BREWING?

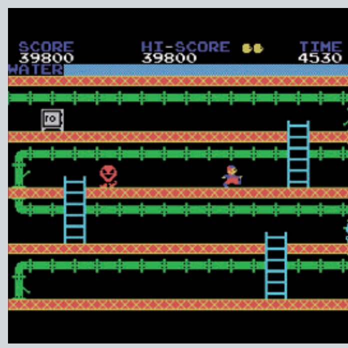
All the latest news from the homebrew community



» [ZX Spectrum] Try to use the name in a sentence.

» Back to the grindstone

Although it honestly hasn't felt like it, a whole two years have passed since Jonathan Cauldwell released the very well-received *Quantum Gardening* through Cronosoft, so he's started working on something new. For reasons that may never become clear, he's decided to call the thing *Slubberdegullion*, and it's a flick-screen shoot-'em-up similar to *Cybernoid*, except that the player's ship rotates and thrusts in order to move.



» [MSX] *Plumber's* inspirations are clear.

» Glittering prizes

Officially launched at the beginning of May, the 2009-flavoured edition of the now-venerable – well, it's been running since 2003 – MSXDev competition has already gathered some momentum. Prizes have been offered, four in-production titles announced, and there's even a completed game in the form of Andrea Gasparrini's platformer *Plumber*. Worryingly, regular entrant Karoshi Corporation has decided that the genre most fitting for its upcoming announced project *Ba-Boon!* is "Puzzle/ Exploding monkeys"…

» And the winner is…

And as one competition starts, another draws to a close; the fourth PDROMs.de Coding Competition finished at the start of June and produced a total of eight new puzzle games, developed for consoles ranging from the Colecovision and NES all the way through to the Game Boy Advance. The judges haven't finished… uh, judging yet, but we'll try to have a look at some of the entries when they're done. Read more at: **www.pdroms.de/news/18074/**

HOMEBREW

» The scene's latest news and reviews

WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community

» We can be heroes just for one day

Over on the Retro Remakes message board, Space Fractal fancies himself as something of a hero; or, to be a little more accurate, he wants to be a *H.E.R.O.* (Helicopter Emergency Rescue Operation), as in the classic Activision game. With that in mind, it shouldn't be difficult to guess what his new remake, the one called *Cave Heroes*, which he's just released as a public beta at the time of writing, has been based on, but if you're still not entirely sure, take a peep at: **www.spacefractal.com/index.php?id=Cave_Heroes**

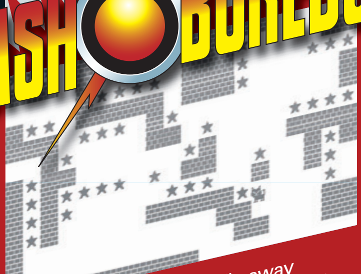


» [PC] Take the opportunity to have an early look at *Cave Heroes* while it's still a work in progress.

» Fire all of your guns at once

Developed by our very own Jason Kelk, who has yet to come to terms with writing about himself in the third person now that he's behind the entire homebrew section, *Quantizer* is a classic space-bound shoot-'em-up. Players shouldn't expect much variety here; just shiny spaceships and bullets. Ridiculous numbers of bullets! *Quantizer* can be downloaded from **illogistix.info**, where the online high-score table is also available for viewing.

FLASH BOREDOM

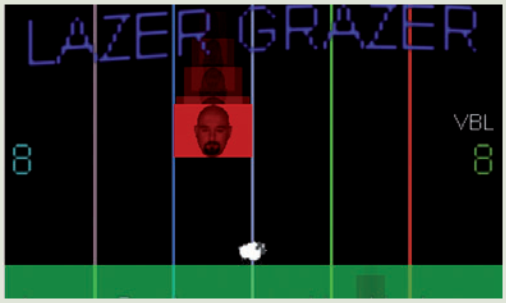


Want to know how to while away those boring office hours? Then don't miss out on **Retro Gamer**'s Flash game of the month. This month we look at

CAT GETS 100 STARS

AS THE TITLE says, the objective is to guide a cat around the screen to collect stars. 62 of them are visible to begin with, so finding the rest requires some experimentation and lateral thinking. It's simple stuff but cute with it, and it's engrossing for at least half an hour.
http://www.nekogames.jp/mt/2009/05/cat_gets_100_stars.html

REMAKES WE'VE BEEN PLAYING…



LAZER GRAZER

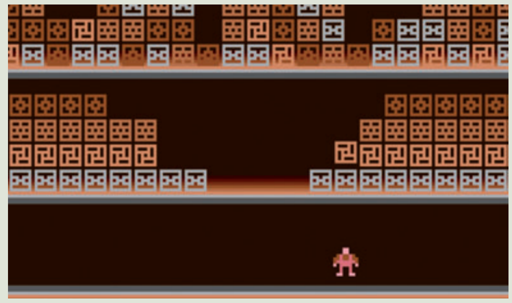
» **DOWNLOAD:** TINYURL.COM/P544ZK



The sheepish star of Lampton Worm's *Lazer Grazer* stands at the bottom of the screen with five lasers searing through the air nearby. But surprisingly, the danger comes not from potentially deadly rays but the coloured blocks bearing the Face of Retrovision, using them as guides as they tumble from the heavens.

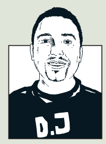
The blue blocks give score, reds end the game, and movement is limited to going either left or right, with the sheep only stopping when the player changes direction or it bumps into the edge of the screen. Don't be fooled by this simplicity because it's hard as nails and infuriatingly addictive, proving that games really don't need an involving back story or cut-scenes to be entertaining.

Remake of the Month



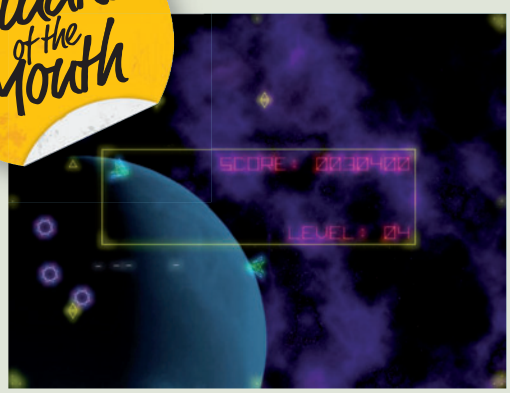
BATTY BUILDERS

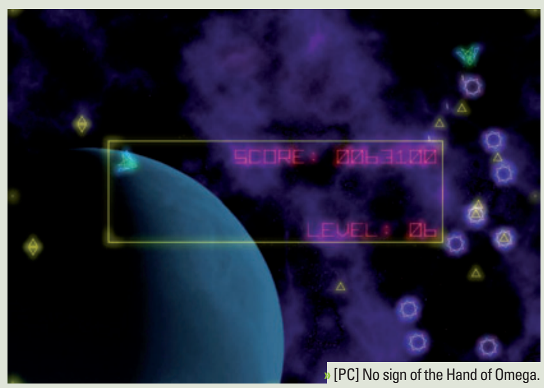
» **DOWNLOAD:** BATTYBUILDERS.WEBNODE.CZ



As the title suggests, the Batty Builders aren't your common or garden construction workers who are content with carrying bricks; instead they work by throwing the LBC's finest around like professional jugglers. The player's builder stands at the bottom of the screen, catching bricks that tumble from the scrolling stock at the top before lobbing them upwards towards the under-construction wall in the middle of the play area.

The chunky graphics are taken from the 1983 Atari 8-bit original and weren't particularly notable even when it was released, but they're at least functional. The gameplay is similarly primitive but serviceable, and, although *Batty Builders* may be more fun for the nostalgia than anything else, it's still a reasonable way to kill a spare hour.





» [PC] No sign of the Hand of Omega.

OMEGA RACE 2009

» **DOWNLOAD:** TARDIS.DK



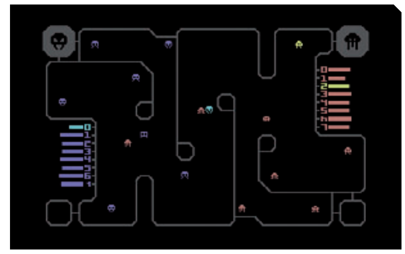
Surprisingly, there are a few vector-based games from the Seventies and Eighties out there still waiting to get the full-on *Geometry Wars*-style 'glowing vectors' treatment, and *Omega Race* is one of them… or at least it was, because Sokurah over at Tardis Remakes has recreated it and presumably got a reasonable bulk discount on glowing lines with which to build it.

The battle rages in a locked-off corner of space, walled in by force fields and containing a central block, which further limits movement. A fighter materialises at one corner, and the player at the controls can rotate it, turn on the thrusters to push it forwards or shoot, all in a similar vein to *Asteroids*; the difference is those walls, which don't harm the player but keep their ship from wrapping around so it's always in the line of fire.

Omega Race 2009 is close to the mark as a remake. The controls take some getting used to, but once acclimatised it's possible to barrel around like a thing possessed, all accompanied by atmospheric background music and more glowing than an illegal street race. The action starts off sedate but, as more drone types are introduced along with new varieties of mine, things soon become far more challenging.









» **Above:** [GBA] DHG's cancelled *Motocross Challenge* for the GBA was released through *RGCD* and is now on the way to the DS. » **Right (top):** [C64] *Not Even Human* by Onslaught. » **Right:** [C64] *Kikstart C16* was given a cartridge release through *RGCD*.

HOMEBREW HEROES

OUR HERO THIS MONTH IS **JAMES 'HEAVY STYLUS' MONKMAN**, WHO IS THE EDITOR OF CD-BASED REVIEW MAGAZINE RGCD, PUBLISHES A VARIETY OF HOMEBREW GAMES, AND HAS RECENTLY BECOME INVOLVED IN DEVELOPMENT WITH THE ATARI STE ACTION GAME R0X

Retro Gamer: So, what first drew your attention to homebrew games?
James Monkman: When I was in my very early teens I had both an Atari STE and an Amiga but very little money to buy full-price games with, so I always used to rely on what was called the public domain and shareware scene for most of my gaming needs. I think that's really where my interest originally started.

RG: Where did the idea for *RGCD* come from, including the unusual choice of publishing medium?
JM: As some readers may already be aware, the *RGCD* project was originally born on **Retro Gamer**'s forum in a thread about the old cover discs that used to appear on the Live Publishing version of the magazine – I was one of the readers that liked them. Although the original idea was to create some sort of unofficial homebrew supplement for **Retro Gamer**, by the time issue 1 was finished it had evolved into an independent multiplatform discmag, reviewing new games for old machines and retro-style PC remakes and indie releases.

The magazine itself differs from similar review sites and blogs out there as it comes on a CD and all the games reviewed are included on disc. Why CD? I get asked this question a lot, and the honest answer is simple: that's the way I personally like it. I used to be a fan of the old discmags for the Atari and Amiga, so I guess it probably stems from that. In fact, if I had the time – and the actual coding ability – *RGCD* would be released on a dual-format ST/Amiga 720KB floppy disk!

RG: The move to publishing games was a brave one, especially since you're dealing almost exclusively with cartridge-based titles. What prompted that decision?
JM: It was only recently that I discovered that the C64 had a cartridge port, so I did a bit of research into how carts worked. I found a guy on eBay who creates and sells new C64 cartridges and converted a few small, simple games with help from TMR (Cosine) and Enthusi (Onslaught). The carts were made just for fun; that's why we sell them at cost price. There's no technical wizardry involved; with a bit of research and patience anyone can make them – the ROMs are freely available.

RG: *r0x* marks your debut as a homebrew developer. What was it like to work on it as part of a team?
JM: Well the language barrier certainly made things a bit tricky at times, but it was a huge amount of fun and I've made some really good friends. *r0x* is a simple game but we're all really pleased with it.

HIGH FIVE
The homebrew games that James can't live without

1 **Spelunky (Derek Yu) [PC]** Hardcore procedurally generated 2D platformer with roguelike elements and super-cute pixel art. Currently my all-time favourite game.

2 **Noitu Love 2: Devolution (Konjak) [PC]** Often compared to *Gunstar Heroes* and *Metal Slug*; in my opinion *Noitu Love* actually outshines them both. An amazing game.

3 **Chu Chu Rocket (Reservoir Gods) [Atari STE]** I'm a fan of the Dreamcast original, and this unofficial 16-bit Atari port is a firm favourite at *RGCD* HQ.

4 **Knight 'N' Grail (Psytronik) [C64]** I've only played the preview of this console-style platformer, but it's already shaping up to be a fantastic release.

5 **Redrunner (Aleksi Eeben) [C64]** *Redrunner* is a blast, especially with two players on the go. Worth downloading for the sampled speech alone!

RG: Is there anything that didn't make it into the released version of *r0x* that makes you perhaps wonder about a sequel, or do you have other plans?
JM: Loads of stuff was cut from the design document: we had plans for a shop between levels and a story mode, but the work required to implement them far outweighed what they would add to the game. I'm not sure about a sequel but TomChi and I have been discussing the possibility of another game featuring the same character, perhaps on an earlier mission.

RG: Of the projects you've been involved in, which would be the one you're most proud of and why?
JM: Out of everything I've done, I think I'm most proud of *RGCD* itself – in total we've now reviewed around 200 games, which is a huge achievement. However, it certainly wouldn't have been possible without the great team of dedicated writers that have been involved with the project, so thanks, guys, you know who you are!

RG: Where do you think the homebrew community's popularity comes from?
JM: The thing I love about the modern homebrew/indie scene is the fact that developers are totally free to express themselves, and as a result some of the games are really interesting and unique, both in terms of design and target platform. They don't have to worry about a corporate marketing department breathing down their necks and complaining that their design won't sell. Most of the games created are done for the love of it, and when made well that love invested really shines through.

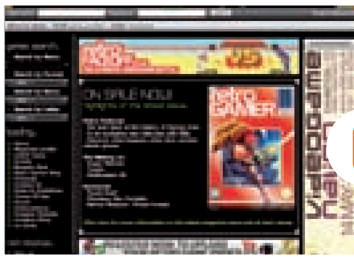
I also see it as a healthy alternative to mainstream gaming. There's still life in the 8/16-bit scene, so why move on?

BARGAIN HUNT

DESPERATE TO FINISH OFF YOUR RETRO COLLECTION? WANT TO GET YOUR HANDS ON ALL THE BEST BARGAINS BUT DON'T KNOW WHERE TO GO? VISIT **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET/BARGAIN_HUNT.PHP** AND DISCOVER ALL THE CLASSIC MACHINES YOU'LL EVER NEED

You've been asking for it forever, but we're pleased to announce a brand new look for **Retro Gamer**'s Buyer's Guide section that makes it incredibly easy to get your hands on all the best retro bargains.

Using our new search engine couldn't be easier. All you need to do is select a manufacturer and machine from the pull-down menu. Once you've found the system you're after, the magic of the internet will search eBay for the top 20 ending items, meaning that you'll be able to gauge the market's health with very little effort. This month, Darran's kicking himself for not buying a copy of *Moonwalker.*



Head over to the excellent **www.retrogamer.net** and click on 'Bargain Hunt' or visit **www.retrogamer.net/bargain_hunt.php**



Put in the details for the greatest computer in the world and discuss with your staff writer why it's so much better than the ZX Spectrum



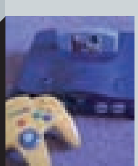
Swoon in delight as you find yourself getting ever closer to collecting all the £1.99 *Simulator* games that Codemasters ever released

eBAY BARGAINS

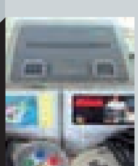
Retro Gamer has been scouring the world's most popular auction site to find the best bargains out there…



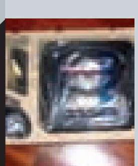
■ Darran was sick as a pig when he saw this Sega Nomad with a new screen go for £49.99 – he paid almost double that for his recently.



■ With an hour left on the clock, this Nintendo 64 with one controller and a copy of *International Soccer*, was yours going for just 99p.



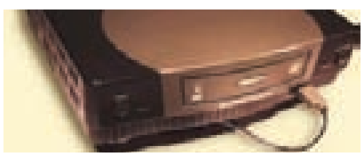
■ At £17, this *Super Nintendo* with two controllers, *Super Mario All-Stars* and *Super Star Wars* was an absolutely bargainous deal.



■ For £20 each, this unusual lot of ten brand new *Mega Drive 2* consoles would make a great addition to any Sega enthusiast's retro collection.

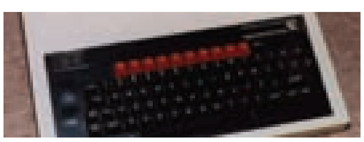
3DO

3DO GOLDSTAR	£45+ ($81+)
PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)	£40+ ($74+)
PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)	£20+ ($37+)



ACORN

ARCHIMEDES	£30 ($55)
ATOM	£50 ($92)
ELECTRON	£10 ($18)
BBC MICRO	£15 ($28)



AMSTRAD

CPC 464	£10+ ($18+)
CPC 664	£90+ ($165+)
CPC 6128	£25+ ($46+)
GX4000	£50+ ($92+)

APPLE

APPLE II	£30+ ($55+)

ATARI

400/800/600XL/XE	£20+ ($37+)
2600 (VCS)	£20+ ($37+)
5200	£30 ($55)
7800	£20+ ($37+)
JAGUAR	£20+ ($37+)
JAGUAR CD	£70 ($129)
LYNX I/II	£20+ ($37+)
ST	£20+ ($37+)

BANDAI

GUNDAM RX-78	£75+ ($138+)
PLAYDIA	£90 ($166)
PIPPIN (ATMARK)	£500+ ($921+)
WONDERSWAN	£10 ($18)
WONDERSWAN COLOR	£20 ($37)
WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL	£25 ($46)



COMMODORE

AMIGA 500/600/1200	£20+ ($37+)
C16/PLUS/4	£15+ ($28+)
C64	£10+ ($18+)
C64 GS	£30+ ($55+)
C128	£30+ ($55+)
CDTV	£20 ($37)
CD32	£25 ($46)
VIC-20	£10+ ($18+)



FUJITSU

FUJITSU FM	£100+ ($184+)
FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY	£200+ ($368+)



MISCELLANEOUS

BALLY ASTROCADE	£20 ($37)
BARCODE BATTLER	£5 ($18)
CASIO LOOPY	£25 ($46)
FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F	£10 ($18)
COLECOVISION	£30 ($55)
DRAGON 32/64	£8 ($15)
ARCADIA 2001	£10 ($18)
EPOCH CASSETTE VISION	£20 ($37)
EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION	£30 ($55)
INTELLIVISION	£40+ ($74+)
ODYSSEY	£10 ($18)
ORIC-1	£20 ($37)
PLAYSTATION	£10 ($18)
SAM COUPÉ	£50-£200 ($92-$368)
SUPERVISION	£15 ($28)
TIGER ELEC GAME.COM	£15 ($28)
TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)	£10 ($18)
VECTREX (MB/GCE)	£80 ($147)
X68000	£90+ ($166+)

MSX

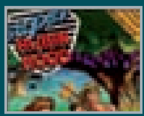
MSX 1	£10+ ($18+)
MSX 2	£20+ ($37+)
MSX 2+	£30+ ($55+)
MSX TURBO R	£30+ ($55+)

NEC

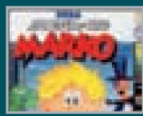
PC-6###	£10+ ($18+)

RETRO AUCTION WATCH

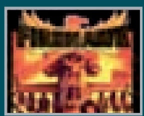
Retro Gamer sifts through the pages of eBay to report back on any items of interest, hardware or software, that caught our eyes. So point your peepers at these classic and not-so-classic Oliver Twins games



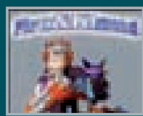
SUPER ROBIN HOOD
System: **CPC**
Normally sells for: **99p**
Ended at: **No Sale**



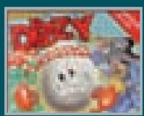
MARKO'S MAGIC FOOTBALL
System: **Mega Drive**
Normally sells for: **£8**
Ended at: **£1.10**



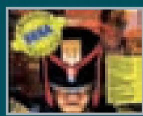
FIREHAWK
System: **NES**
Normally sells for: **£3**
Ended at: **£5**



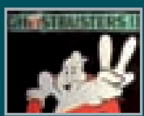
FIRO & KLAWD
System: **Playstation**
Normally sells for: **£10**
Ended at: **£4.40**



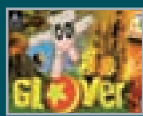
FANTASY ISLAND DIZZY
System: **Amiga**
Normally sells for: **99p**
Ended at: **£5.80**



JUDGE DREDD
System: **Game Boy**
Normally sells for: **£6**
Ended at: **£12.90**



GHOSTBUSTERS II
System: **Amiga**
Normally sells for: **£3**
Ended at: **£1.40**



GLOVER
System: **N64**
Normally sells for: **£8**
Ended at: **£1.40**

PC-8801	**£20 ($37)**
PC-9801	**£35 ($65)**
PC-FX	**£50 ($92)**
PC-ENGINE	**£55 ($101)**
PC-ENGINE GT	**£70+ ($129+)**
TURBOGRAFX-16	**£30 ($55)**
TURBO EXPRESS	**£50 ($92)**
SUPERGRAFX	**£80 ($147)**
PC-E CD-ROM/ TURBOGRAFX CD	**£50+ ($92+)**
PC-E DUO/ TURBO DUO	**£120 ($221)**
DUO-R	**£80 ($147)**

NINTENDO

FAMICOM	**£60 ($111)**
FAMICOM AV	**£40 ($74)**
FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM	**£70 ($129)**
SHARP FAMICOM TWIN	**£100 ($184)**
GAME & WATCH	**£1+ ($2+)**
GAME BOY B/W	**£5 ($9)**
GAME BOY POCKET	**£8 ($15)**
GAME BOY COLOR	**£12 ($22)**
GAME BOY ADVANCE	**£25 ($46)**
N64	**£10 ($18)**
N64 DD	**£150+ ($276+)**
NES (TOASTER)	**£15 ($28)**
NES (DOG BONE)	**£50 ($92)**
SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)	**£20 ($37)**
SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JAPAN)	**£50+ ($92+)**
VIRTUAL BOY	**£80 ($147)**



PHILIPS

CD-I	**£20+ ($37+)**
CD-I 450/500	**£30 ($55)**
VIDEOPAC G7000	**£10 ($18)**
VIDEOPAC G7400	**£20 ($37)**

SEGA

32X	**£35 ($65)**
DREAMCAST	**£25 ($46)**
GAME GEAR	**£15 ($28)**
SG-1000	**£50-£150 ($80-$260)**
SC-3000	**£50 ($92)**
MASTER SYSTEM I/II	**£10 ($18)**



AMSTRAD MEGA PC	**£10 ($18)**
TERADRIVE	**£100 ($184)**
MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II	**£25 ($46)**
GENESIS 3	**£35 ($65)**
NOMAD	**£100 ($184)**
MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/ CDX/X'EYE	**£100+ ($184+)**
MEGA-CD (SCD) I/II	**£50+ ($92+)**
PICO	**£20 ($37)**
SATURN	**£30 ($55)**
MEGA CD (SCD) I/II	**£50+ ($92+)**

SINCLAIR

ZX80	**£200 ($368)**
ZX81	**£70 ($129)**
ZX SPECTRUM 48K	**£10 ($18)**
ZX SPECTRUM 128K	**£40 ($74)**
ZX SPECTRUM+	**£35 ($65)**
ZX SPECTRUM +2	**£35 ($65)**
ZX SPECTRUM +3	**£40 ($74)**

SNK

NEO-GEO AES	**£150+ ($276+)**
NEO-GEO MVS	**£70 ($129)**
NEO-GEO CD	**£100 ($184)**
NEO-GEO CDZ	**£80+ ($147+)**
NEO-GEO POCKET	**£20 ($37)**
NEO-GEO POCKET COLOR	**£35 ($65)**

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

HI. MY NAME IS MELISSA WARD. I HAVE A PASSION FOR COLLECTING ALL THINGS SINCLAIR ZX SPECTRUM



My name's Melissa Ward, I'm 29 years old and currently work for the NHS in the heart of Southampton.



» The pride of my collection. My fiancé bought me five binders full of *Crash* magazine from issue one, all in mint condition, for Christmas. How cool is that? He really doesn't get the whole 'retro gaming' thing and tolerates my Speccy clutter, bless him.



» My text adventure creation software. I love Professional Adventure Writer and the Graphic Adventure Creator, upon which I wrote my GCSE Computer Studies exam.



» Small cassette boxes, I've lost count of how many tapes I have, but it's well over a thousand, probably pushing two… See that Cassette 50 in there? Priceless.



» It may not be that rare, but it still stays on display, pride of place in my living room. My ZX Spectrum 48K, mint box and poly, complete with the software pack. Come on, you can't tell me this picture doesn't give you a warm fuzzy feeling?

If you have a collection that you feel the rest of the **Retro Gamer** readership needs to know about, then contact us at **retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk** and we'll do our best to get you in the magazine.

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**



» For security reasons, the Lara Croft statue has been removed from the Imagine office. It took nine games journalists to do the job.

A SHAMELESS PLUG FROM A FRIENDLY STALKER

Hi there, Retro Gamer

I'm a long time reader but first time writer. This is a quick note to say I've been reading your magazine since issue one and have every copy stored lovingly in their folders with pride of place on my bedroom shelf.

I'm writing to ask a huge favour of your readers. I'm really struggling against the YouTube big guns to get my ZX Spectrum, Atari ST and GameCube game reviews noticed by the masses, so please can I use your well-loved letters page for a little plug?

Please can I ask that your readers make their way to YouTube and search for 'interghost' and then, if they like my stuff, subscribe and make me very happy.

If you can do this for me I will be forever in your debt. I'm also working on collecting every UK GameCube release. If I complete my goal, you'll be the first to know. And I'll show you my collection. I will also plug your amazing magazine in my next video.

Thanks, guys. Oh, and well done for netting Iain Lee. He's a classic.

interghost, Poole

PS: I park outside your office every day when collecting my wife from the bank across the road, and always look up to your windows at the Lara Croft figure and imagine the magic being weaved inside your offices. Ha ha.

No worries, this is the easiest request we've ever done. All we had to do was copy and paste your email, and then write this self-reflexive bit of text you're reading right now. Simples.

STAR LETTER

RG'LL FIX IT!

Dear Retro Gamer,

I've been a subscriber for over a year now (the Sega Saturn retrospective was the clincher – it's my favourite magazine and I still read it). I became a retrobate today and hope to add more games when I can. I really enjoyed the new Let's All Play section, and look forward to seeing what games you'll cover next.

I was wondering if there might be an article on Sega arcade games in the mid-to-late-Nineties (Models 1-3, for example). Many games in that era still hold up today. Indeed, I get a kick out of playing *Scud Race* and *Daytona USA 2*. Better yet, after the success of the *Mega Drive Collection*, how about Sega releases a collection of arcade-perfect conversations of Model 1-3 games. As good as *Sega Rally* and *Virtua Fighter 2* were on the Saturn, I bet people would love to play these games the way they were in arcades. It would allow games that weren't converted a second chance. It's been 15 years and we *still* don't have a perfect *Daytona USA* to play in the home. I'd sure pay money for that.

Finally, how about a *Shenmue* special? Although some may be reluctant to class it as retro, I've noticed there are frequent references to it throughout the issues of **RG**. You could do a massive retrospective on how great the game is, which is then sent off to Sega/Yu Suzuki who suddenly realise they've been a bit stupid and release the third game. The world would be a better place. Well, I can dream.

Benji Copeman, email

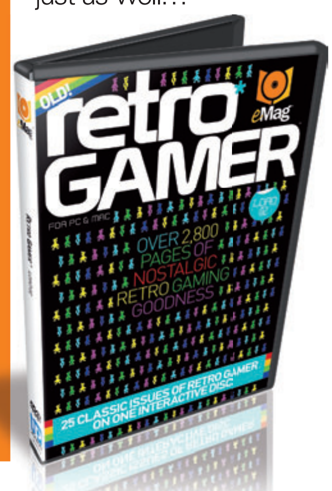


» *Scud Race* really gets Benji's heart racing and he'd love to see a collection of arcade-perfect conversions.

Stu's a big fan of *Shenmue* and has been itching to do a Making Of for ages, so it's certainly something we'll consider. A compilation of classic Sega coin-ops is a good idea, and with franchises such as *Golden Axe, House Of The Dead* and *Jambo Safari* returning to our screens, Sega is certainly not averse to dusting down its arcade classics.

WIN!

Every month, one lucky reader will receive a copy of our brand new eMag, **Retro Gamer Load 2**, a bargain if ever there was one. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words or something *Strider*-related will go down just as well…



MR T

To the folks at Retro Gamer

Thank you for putting together a tremendous magazine. I was a gamer back in the days of the old Infocom and Sierra computer games, and I really enjoy reminiscing as I read through your fantastic articles.

Not long ago, I came across a store that makes custom T-shirts and I got them to make a *Zork* shirt for me. The front has the familiar *Zork I* box art, and the small text says "Frobozz Magic T-shirt Company". The back has the famous opening lines of the game. I've sent you a couple of photos.

Regards

Dave, email

Natty shirt, Dave, and hearing that you went out and designed your own custom retro T-shirt reminded us to pull our fingers out and get on with designing our



» Dave displays the *Zork* T-shirt he had custom-made.



CONTACT US

Snail Mail: Retro Gamer, Imagine Publishing, Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ

Email: retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk



Next Month: Gary Bracey

>> BURNING QUESTION?

IF YOU HAVE a burning question, such as 'will David Braben ever patch things up with Ian Bell', or 'does Matthew Smith check into hotels as Miner Willy', then you should head straight over to our forum to post your questions to our interviewees. The best of the bunch will be answered and revealed in the next issue. To find out who we'll be interviewing in the coming months, visit the Retro Gamer forum now at www.retrogamer.net/forum

new batch of Retro Gamer T-shirts. From the fine Zork-manship of yours, we may tap you up for a few ideas.

HARE-BRAINED SOLUTION

Dear Retro Gamer

I wonder how many of your readers remember a BBC Micro 'game' called *Hareraiser*? It was actually a puzzle (sold in two separate parts) consisting of a series of graphics screens containing clues to solve, the selling point was that the prize was the famous 'Golden Hare', which had previously been the buried treasure of the book *Masquerade* by Kit Williams. I don't remember which systems the program was available for, apart from BBC, but I do recall that it supposedly had a special copy-protection device, which meant that if audio copying was used on the cassette tape on which it was supplied, the result would not contain all the data needed to solve the puzzle. I bought the first part of the game but couldn't get anywhere with it. Was it ever solved, and if so, by whom? And what was the solution? I'd be very interested to know if any of your readers can help.

Jonathan Ormond, Ludlow

Ahh videogames' most infamous treasure hunt. Well, readers, does anyone remember the notorious Haresoft game *Hareraiser*, and, if so, did you ever finish it? We doubt it, the game is supposedly impossible to crack and the Golden Hare was auctioned at Sotheby's for £31,000,



>> We were going to get Steve to superimpose a copy of Retro Gamer into the hands of Lady Liberty, but we were worried it might offend our US readers.

before being auctioned off again where its whereabouts now remain a mystery once again. Can whoever has it please get in touch with us, or at least write a quick expansion pack for the game so we can continue the hunt.

JAPAN-PLEASE

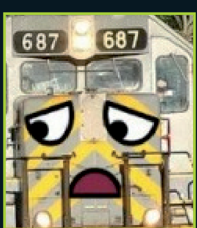
Dear Retro Gamer

First I just want to say what a fantastic job you lot are doing, I've been reading **Retro Gamer** since issue one and have never missed an issue. Even though I'm more of a console fan, I still find reading about the old 8-bit micros really interesting and when you cover consoles and games it brings back memories of my childhood. The Mega Drive feature you ran recently was fantastic. I am still is a huge fan of the console. Which brings me to my second question: would it be possible to see more interviews with the various different people at Sega Japan discussing the development behind some of Mega Drive's best classic videogames? I would love to know the whole story of how *Ristar* came to be, or what difficulties AM2 faced when porting *Virtua Racing* to Mega Drive. And to top it off, the making of the *Streets Of Rage* trilogy. I know this all sounds impossible and that some Japanese videogame companies like to keep themselves to themselves, but you managed to interview Yu Suzuki a while back so you did prove it's possible. If you can work your magic that would be great.

Also, I enclose a picture of myself and my sister in front of the Statue of Liberty in New York holding a copy of your wonderful magazine. I was inspired to do this when I >>

> "I'd love to know the story of how Ristar came to be, or the difficulties AM2 faced in porting Virtua Racing to Mega Drive"

RETROBATE PROFILE



Name:	Phil Abel
Joined:	13 May 2009
Location:	UK
Occupation:	Sponge
Website:	Not given
Fave Games System:	Dreamcast

* BEAT THE TEAM

Think you're good at retro games? See if you can beat the staff at some of their favourite games



DARRAN

CHOSEN GAME: ROBOTRON

Why I picked it: It's one of the best score-attack games of all time.

Handy advice: Shoot the spheroids as they appear, or they'll spawn, causing no end of grief.



High-Score: 134,425



STUART

CHOSEN GAME: GYNOUG (WINGS OF WOR)

Why I picked it: I fancied booting up a classic Mega Drive shooter.

Handy advice: Keep moving so as not to get pushed into the corners of the screen, and try to catch all power ups to raise your firepower.



High-Score: 298,640



ASHLEY

CHOSEN GAME: ZOO KEEPER

Why I picked it: It's a great videogame with a huge variety of scoring methods.

Handy advice: Let as many animals out as possible, then jump over them all at once for a huge bonus.



High-Score: 110,320

From the forum

» To have your say visit www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, **Retro Gamer** asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know...

What is your favourite Oliver Twins game?

the_hawk I have fond memories of *Ghost Hunters*. Not the greatest game in the world, but I remember it being great value. It was released at a time when most budget titles seemed like they were thrown together in five minutes. With this you had synthesised speech, smooth animation and basically full-priced production values in a game that cost £1.99.

sirclive1 *Pro BMX Simulator* is the first videogame that springs to mind and I really enjoyed it, a nice top-down view, played simply, but was addictive as hell.

ShadowMan I'd go for *Treasure Island Dizzy*. Perhaps my favourite Dizzy title and a nice huge game to explore with loads of puzzles to solve. The fact that you only had one life was a nightmare.

neuromancer I've all but given up playing the try-to-get-mentioned-in-the-mag game.

yethboth *Ghost Hunters* was a great budget game by the Oliver Twins. At the time it was interesting to control a character and a target system to shoot the baddies to protect your character.

JetSetWilly *Maglicland Dizzy*. Plus *Fantasy World Dizzy*, mainly because you can kick Dozy's deckchair into the water and see him float away

mrspud Putting aside my playground hatred of Amstrads, *Professional Ski Simulator* on the CPC464 looked gorgeous and played a great two-player game.

BennyTheGreek None of them. There is a little bit too much Dizzy fanboyism going on at the moment... it was cheap – that's why it sold well. All of the £1.99 games sold well, but very few were any good.

liveinabin Probably *BMX Simulator*, but the stupid game titles, gaudy inlays and ridiculous... well, lies on said inlays always put me off Codemasters' games.

Sputryk Either *Kwik Snax* or *Fast Food Dizzy*, both of which provided quick, fun play though neither was particularly good. Never enjoyed Dizzy's usual capers: traipsing from screen to screen, trying to find which item to use where and when... zzz... And, being an 8-bit fan, I wouldn't know about their 'modern' releases.

TheDude18 *Dizzy Down The Rapids* (C64) was great fun, far better than the Commodore 64 version of *Toobin*.

Timothy Lumsden Definitely *Super Robin Hood*, if only partly for the craziness of putting 'Super' in front of the name of a twee folk hero. I love the way the CPC version looked. Plus it was pretty cheap if my memory serves.

Amigajay I loved some of their simulator games, but it has to come down to the *Dizzy* series and the best of those was *Treasure Island Dizzy*.

ismellicecream I would say *Dizzy* – I liked the atmosphere of *Treasure Island Dizzy*, but the lack of lives, and instant deaths ruined it.

smurph *Super Robin Hood*. Coincidentally this is also my favourite Amstrad game ever.

zerocool I'd have to go for *BMX Simulator*. At the time, this game was so cool.

psj3809 Was never a Dizzy fan but did like *BMX Simulator* and the underrated *Championship Jet Ski Simulator*, both great games.

rinoa *Treasure Island Dizzy* was, and still is, my favourite.

paranoid marvin You guys do realise it's *Pro BMX Simulator*, and not the original *BMX Simulator* they released?

ferritoxide It has to be *Fast Food* on the Spectrum for me. I love the simplicity of the game and the adrenaline rush it can give when things get hairy. But you always know that if you don't succeed it was your fault.

garryc Oliver who? I only know about Jeff Minter and that bloke who wrote *Manic Miner*.

twoheadedboy I think the only one that I've actually played is *Fantastic Dizzy* on the Mega Drive, so I guess I have to say that one. Harrumph!

YOUR OPINION PLEASE

FORGOTTEN FIGHTERS

Yethboth I really enjoyed *Star Gladiators* on PlayStation. And *Rival Schools* also on the PSone is another forgotten fighting classic that I really liked. In fact, it's one of my all-time favourite games.

ShadowMan I would really love to see *Violent Storm* turn up in the magazine, everyone remembers Konami's other great beat-'em-up games such as *Turtles*, *The Simpsons* and *X-Men*, but *Violent Storm* never seems to get a look in.

NonShinyGoose There are a few forgotten ones on Nintendo 64 – *Dark Rift, Dual Heroes, Fighter's Destiny* and *Fighting Force 64*.

Steve Halfpenny *Shin Nekketsu Kouha: Kunio-tachi no Banka* on the Super Famicom. Incredible role-playing game style beat-'em-up where characters develop, more come, some are killed, you get more moves and you ride a bike... what more could you ask for?!

NEXT-GEN HUNGER

Rinoa I'm shocked people are already looking towards the next gen. To me, the current gen still feels new and has plenty more to come. I won't be getting excited about the next generation for some years yet.

liveinabin I'm really liking the PlayStation 3 right now. It's really got into its stride and we're seeing some astonishing games that are really putting the power of the console to good use.

XFile2708 I'm really not hungry at all for the next generation. My Xbox 360 hasn't been switched on for over six weeks now. Don't get me wrong, I love Xbox Live and there are some great games on Xbox 360, it's just that these days I find more fun in playing my old retro consoles like the Atari 2600, Amstrad 464 and Mega Drive.

DPrinny I'm hungry for the next generation like how a lard-arse is for vegetables.

FUNNY SHOP NAMES

jdanddiet I wince every time I see one of these, and there seem to be plenty in Essex. Fish and chip shops appear to be the worst offenders: The Codfather, Fishy Business and so on. Today, however, I saw a hairdressers called Mane Attraction. Good grief.

StickHead Some of my favourites: Spex Appeal, Jason's Donner Van, Sellfridges, Wok This Way, BDI Security and Sofa So Good.

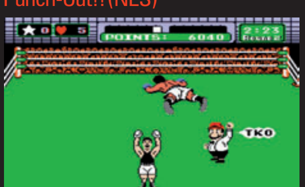
emalder I remember visiting Amsterdam several years ago and seeing a Chinese resturant called The Foo King.

Timothy Lumsden The dullest kebab shop name ever: Quality Kebab Centre. Wow. It must have taken a long time to come up with that little gem.

Old VS NEW

Each month, we'll be finding out if the classics are better than their successors. This month, which *Space Invaders* is your favourite?

Punch-Out!! (NES)



Punch-Out!! (Wii)



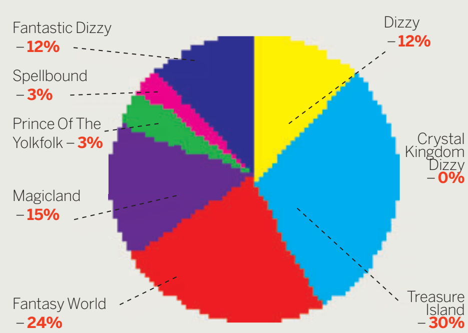
50% | 50%

AmigaJay "It looks naff. The NES version should win"

The Loafer "Stays true to the original"

HOT TOPIC

What's your favourite Dizzy Game?



"Never liked the traipsing around *Dizzy* games, but as *Dizzy* is the only such one in this list that I have given any real time to, my vote has to be just *Dizzy*."
– Sputryk

"*Prince Of The Yolkfolk*. It's a great little game. Small but perfectly formed."
– Ferret Oxide

noticed other readers had sent in pictures of themselves holding the magazine.
Daniel Heath, Mitcham

While we would love to speak to more Japanese developers, getting them to chat can often be difficult. However, you may notice that the seemingly impenetrable shield that surrounds them is slowly being eroded. Jonti recently spoke, not only to Yu Suzuki, but also to Yoshio Sakamoto about the genesis of *Super Metroid*, Damien managed to chat to Hudson Soft and you'll be pleased to hear that there's more in the pipeline. You'll be even more delighted to know that a Making Of both *Ristar* and *Virtua Racing* is something we're looking in to.

THE TOYMINATOR

Hi Darran

I'm writing to let you know what a great magazine you have and how much the retro gaming scene inspires all my work. I am a big robot fan and, inspired by the urban art toy culture, decided to develop my own product.

The idea was to create a fully articulated, stylised robot mainly inspired by the original Eighties Transformers designs. The six graphic editions chosen reflect a wide range of influences and it was here that I decided to do a retro version.

I've attached some images and thought you might be interested in taking a look.

Nick Mannion

We were very impressed with your creation, Nick. If you have any more retro-themed robots in the works, send us some more snaps. Darran's after a *Strider* robot that he can take for romantic walks along the beach and picnics in the New Forest.

FAN FOR THE MEMORIES

Dear Darran

I am 37 years old and each time I pick up **Retro Gamer** it takes me back to the best years of my life. I've spent many a misguided hour pouring money into arcade machines.



» If you've built something in your shed that has a retro slant to it then send us a picture and we'll try and get it in the magazine.

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

E3

We were all impressed by this year's Electronic Entertainment Expo, especially considering the amount of retro love that was on display. The announcement of new *Metroid, Castlevania*, and 2D *Super Mario Bros* games has got us looking forward to the coming months. In terms of the next-generation stuff, we were all impressed by *Uncharted 2*, *The Last Guardian* and *Left 4 Dead 2*. However, Steve was disappointed a new *Cool Boarders* game wasn't announced – we laughed at him for a full 17 minutes.

Getting an Amiga 500 Computer at the age of 15 was fantastic and I thought nothing would top that. For many years I've been collecting MAME ROMs and Amiga ADF files (legally of course) and enjoyed emulation, using an X-Arcade Tank Stick. However, nothing beats using the real hardware.

Now I collect handheld games and computer systems. My items include Nintendo Game & Watch, Futuretronics handhelds such as *Pac-Man* and *Galaxian*. Game Gear and SNES. My computers include Amiga 500, Amiga 500 Plus, Amiga 600, Amiga 1200 and Amiga CD32.

Anyway, enough of my rambling; I have a billiard room full of 'Eighties Junk' (as my wife calls it) to get back to. Retro gaming's alive and well in Australia.

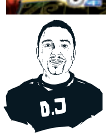
Danny McSweeney, email

Anyone with their own billiard room has our respect. It sounds like you're amassing quite a collection. If it gets to the point where you can't fit any more in, let us know and we'll get you into Collector's Corner.

> "I am 37 years old, and each time I pick up Retro Gamer magazine it takes me back to the best years of my life"

CURRENTLY PLAYING





DARRAN

Rock Band 2

After trading my 360 complete band setup with a member of **games™**, I've been hammering away at the PS3 version. Needless to say every night in the Jones household ends with *More Than A Feeling* and *Don't Stop Believing*.





STUART

Pokémon Platinum

After reviewing it this issue, I haven't been able to pull myself away from the latest *Pokémon* outing. In fact, such is my enthusiasm for the game, my mates are now telling me that I'm starting to act as old as I look.





ASHLEY

Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis

It may only be a free unlockable, but *Fate Of Atlantis* is the reason to get *Staff Of Kings* on Wii. It has more charm, sophistication and polish in the first five minutes than the whole of LucasArts latest effort.

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Special Thanks
To Sega for 18 years of Sonic games

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13 issue subscription UK – £51.90
13 issue subscription Europe – £70
13 issue subscription ROW – £80

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Distributed by Seymour Distribution, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London, EC1A 9PT ☎ 0207 429 4000

ISSN 1742-3155

LOCK & LOAD

It's excitement overload as we launch a brand new feature that examines every aspect of classic arcade games. The first title in our sights: Taito's Operation Wolf



OTHER GREAT FEATURES

- With *Fallout 3* still riding high in the charts, we go back to the very beginning and speak to the developer of the original games and the mysterious Van Buren
- How much do you really know about *Bomberman*? The minds behind the hit franchise reveal all in **Retro Gamer**'s exclusive new interview
- *Super Sprint* remains one of the most iconic top-down racers ever. Its creator explains how it went on to become one of the company's biggest arcade hits

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NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE 13 AUGUST 2009



THE FIREMEN

The Firemen was an unusual game that detailed the heroic exploits of two firemen, Pete and Danny, who are trying to save people trapped inside a towering inferno on Christmas Eve. Do the pair succeed or end up getting their fingers burned? Let's find out, shall we…



SCREEN 1
As our two fire-fighting heroes douse the flames, rescuing the building from potentially melting, they're left to ponder how thick the window glass really is.



SCREEN 2
But their conversation is soon disrupted by a sudden backdraft, which shatters the glass and sends a concentrated ball of fire towards the hapless pair.



SCREEN 3
After the explosion, the room goes dark. That is until the high-pitched wails of an angel in a dodgy red wig are heard from the smoke and rubble.



SCREEN 4
That's when our heroes re-emerge. Pete's trapped under a rock so Danny pulls him to safety, but not before counting to three and being violently ill.



SCREEN 5
What's this? Snow? What an ironic way to end a game about fighting fire. The hot stuff's polar opposite turns up late for the Christmas party.